

# A COMMENT

Upon the

# Two Tales

OF OUR

ANCIENT, RENOVVVED,  
and EVER-LIVING POET

St *JEFFRAY CHAUCER*, Knight.

Who,

For his Rich Fancy, Pregnant In-  
vention, and Present Composure,  
deserved the Countenance of a  
PRINCE, and his Laureat

Honour.

*Brathwaite Richard*

---

The *MILLER'S TALE*,

AND

The *WIFE* of *BATH*.

---

Addressed and Published by Special Authority.

---

LONDON, Printed by *W. Godbid*, and  
are to be Sold by *Robert Crofts* at the Crown  
in *Chancery-Lane*, 1665.

---

PR 1924

B.T.  
Office

272164

20

5 / 11





TO THE HIGHLY HONoured,  
AND NOBLY ACCOMPLISHED,  
S<sup>r</sup> JOHN WINTOUR,  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
TO HER SACRED MAJESTY,

*THE QUEEN MOTHER;*

A LOYAL SUBJECT  
TO HIS SOVEREIGN,  
A FAITHFUL SERVANT  
TO HIS COUNTRY,  
A RESOLUTE SUFFERER  
FOR BOTH;

R. B.

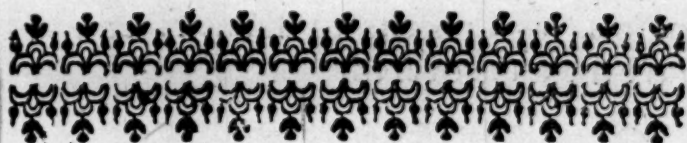
HIS MOST DEVOTIONAL SERVITEURE  
PRESENTS THESE ILLUSTRATIONS,  
PRIMARILY INTENDED,  
&  
PURPOSELY PUBLISHED,  
FOR ENTERTAINMENT  
OF RETIRED HOURS.





**This** *Comment* was an *Assay*,  
whereto the *Author* was im-  
portun'd by Persons of Quali-  
ty, to compleat with Brief,  
Pithy, and Proper Illustrati-  
ons, Suitable to such Sub-  
jects.





*A Commentary upon Chaucer's  
Prologue to his Millers Tale.*

**W**hen that the Knight, &c.

Our Famous and ever-living *Chaucer*, having in his *Knight's Tale* expressed the sweet Comical passages of constant Love, covertly shadowed under the persons of *Palamon* and *Arcite* Corri-vals in their Love to *Emely*: Our merry Host, infinitely delighted with the Pleasure of that Story, desires to have these Tales continued, as the Task was at first by him contrived.

*Unboked is the male, &c.*

A familiar and proper kind of Speech, im-  
plying how their Wits being now set awork,  
and the Male of their Conceits *unboked*,

B

none

none should be so unsociably retired, as to ingross his Conceits to himself, and not have them discovered.

**Now telleth Sir Monke, &c.**

He gives the Monk pre-eminence; but the drunken Miller admits of no such precedence: his Drink frees him from all Monastick reverence.

**But in Pilates voice he began to crie,  
And swoze, &c.**

Here he describes to life the humor of a Drunkard; Fearful Oaths are ever the overflows of full Pots.

**Our host saw that he was drunken of  
And said, abide Robin lebe brother, (ale**

A pleasant contest betwixt our Host and the Miller; whom he first mildly labours to perswade, but when no reason will prevail, he concludes,

**— Tell on a devil way  
Thou art a fool, thy wit is overcome.**

Wherein the Host discovers his anger and in a passionate manner gives way to his humor.

**Now**

**Now herketh qd. the Miller, all and  
But first I make a protestacion (some,  
That I am dronke, &c.**

The Miller makes strong Liquor his Apology, purposely to procure more attention, and incur less offence : For true was his observation in Assayes of this nature :

*In telling tales, unless the truth we smother,  
In pleasing one, we may displease another.*

Right cautious are we then to be of the nature and humor of the hearer, and to peruse him, before we disclose our selves unto him.

— **If I mispeake or say (pray  
Write it the Ale of Southwarke, I you**

Like a true Ale-stake, he tels you where the best Ale is ; and this was made good long ago, as may appear by that overworn Proverb,

*The nappy strong Ale of Southwirke  
Keeps many a Gossip fra the Kirke.*

He proceeds to the Argument of his Tale, in these words,

B 2

For



**For I woll tell a Legende and a Life  
Both of a Carpenter and his wife &c.**

This is the Subject which must give life to his Tale: But entring into more free discourse of the Lightness of the Carpenter's Wife, and the Carpenter's disgrace, he is interrupted by the Reve in these words,

**The Reve answered and said stint thy  
clap, &c.**

This Reve being of the same Profession, cannot endure to hear a Carpenter defam'd upon any condition. He taxeth him for laying such infamy on mens Wives.

*Whose spotless Honour is their highest treasure,*

*And whose good name once lost, is lost for ever.*

**This Drunken Miller spake ful sone agen  
And said, leve brother Oswald,  
Who hath no wife is no Cockold.**

He proves that the Husband's **Crest** is in his Wifes **Curtlie**; and to allay his fury, he confesseth freely that there are many good Wives, amongst which, the Reve's  
Wife



Wife may be one, for ought he knows of.

**To demen of my self that I am one,  
I woll belebe that I am none.**

This agrees well with that Tenet, which applied seasonably, may afford a soveraign Receipt to Jealousie : It is better to be one, and think him none, than to be none, and think him one. The old Bard could sing as much :

*More blith that Cockold looks, who thinks him  
none,  
Than he who ne're was one, yet thinks him one.*

**An husband should not be inquisitive  
Of Goddes privete, ne of his wife.**

An excellent Rule of direction, including a twofold Precept. First, Not to pry too curiously into the secret Cabinet of God's Divine Will. Secondly, Not to be too jealously inquisitive after the Actions of his Wife. For the former, as it is an Argument of too daring presumption ; so the latter, of weakness and indiscretion.

**What should I more say, but this Miller  
He nolde his woꝝd foꝝ no man foꝝbere, &c.**

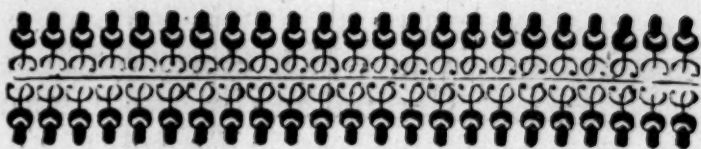
Here our ingenious *Chaucer* displays the Frontless boldness of a Rustick. On he will go with his Tale in spite of all opposition. In the end, our Poet, out of a native and free-bred Modesty, as one doubtful, lest some passages might offend the chaste ear of a modest hearer, he directs him to other historical Tales, plenteously stored with singular Precepts of Morality; which, together with his own Apology, he expresseth in these Lines, and so weaves up his Prologue.

—— Whoso list it not to here  
 Tourne over the lefe, and chose another  
 Tale.

---

A Com-

---



## *A Comment upon the Miller's Tale.*

**W**hilom there was dwelling in  
Drenford  
A rich knave, &c.

It giveth no less life than probable light to any Story, to make mention of the Place, Person, Profession, with other Circumstances concurring. This induced our Poet here, as elsewhere throughout all his Tales, to express such a place where his Scene is formed, such persons to whose condition his Discourse is fitted, with all such passages, by which the concept of the Reader might become artfully entangled, his expectance pleasantly deceived, and the Plot at which he aimed, and by which  
he

he was directed, cunningly closed. You are to observe then, that the Scene here, is laid in *Oxford*; in which Shire, our Poet was born and educated, and by *Rich. 2.* with the Mannor of *Newholme*, in the same County endowed.

### A rich gnofe.

A rich grub, or miserable Caitiff, as I render it; which interpretation, to be proper and significant, I gather by the sence of that antient Metre,

*The Catiff Gnof sed to his Crue,  
My Mency is many, my incomes but few.*

This, as I conceive, explains the Author's meaning; which seems no less seconded by that antient *English* Bard.

*That Gnof, that Grub, of Pesants blude,  
Had store of Goud, yet did no gude.*

Howsoever, we are to suppose him to be a Lodger or Tabler of Scholars and other Artists, for their Chamber and weekly Commons; as he sheweth after.

With him there was dwelling a poor  
Scholer.

This Poor, hath been an Epithete (it seems)

seems) for Scholars in all Ages ; but especially for Astrologers, of which profession this Scholar was, who spend so much time upon Experiments and Conclusions, and make such a pudder about **Jacobs Staff**, as they never leave, till they get a Scrip to't, and so make up a beggarly conclusion.

**If that men asken him in certain houres  
When the men should have Drought or  
Shouers.**

He professed certain (but most uncertain) conjectural notions of Weather, and so probably he might, having (as may be supposed) an Almanack in his bones, by the long familiarity he had with his Hostess *Alyson*, the Carpenter's Wife. Howsoever, it may well appear, that albeit he could judiciously prognosticate of seasons, and by turning of the Weather-cock, gather where the wind was : It was but ill wind to him ; for it blew him no good.

**A chamber he had in that hostelrie,  
Alone, withouten any companie,  
Full fetously dight, &c.**

Here he describes his Chamber and Furniture ;



niture ; with the privacy he enjoyed, to make his Studies more successfully fortunate, according to that of the Poet,

*T<sup>o</sup> improve their knowledge, those who have  
desire,  
Must learn to leave themselves, and to retire.*

Whence we may ground, that retirement is the best means for improvement of knowledge.

**And he himself as sweete as is the rote  
Of Licores, or of any Cete wall.**

Here he glanceth wittily at the delicacy or effeminate privacy of this Scholar : From whence he descendeth to the too accurate disposing or shelving of his Books, his Augur stones, with other mysterious Appendices of his seldom practis'd Art. Likewise, to his Press or Wardrobe, where his Cloaths were curiously folded, his Table with Stammel, or some other Carpet, neatly covered, with his Psaltery, or Instrument of Musick hanging at his Bed-head, to give himself and the Family delightful Melody. This he fits with a Song, to make his Musick more compleat, himself more admir'd,  
and



and his Suit by his Hostess better accepted. Thus spun our young Astrologer out his time; thus spent he his coin, the yearly Pension which his Friends allow'd him.

**This Carpenter had wedded new a wife.**

An unequal Marriage; frosty Age and Youth cannot suit together. This disparity in years, begets a distraction in their affections: Suspicious he is of her youth, and no less conscious of his own debility; both which (like speedy harbingers) make ready way for Jealousie.

**He knew not Cato: for his wit was rude,  
That bad men wed his similitude.**

This was not only the advice of *Cato*, but both of *Pittacus*, and that Cynick *Diogenes*, who on a time, being solicited by a young man, for his best counsel or advice touching his Marriage, wished him to go forth into the streets, where the very Children would direct him in his choice: Like will to like.

*Fair*

faire was this yong wife, and there-  
withall  
As any **Wisele** her bodie gentle and  
small.

Here he descants on the beauty of this  
young Bride.

*So small her Wast, as Nature made small wast.*

So sung our modern Poet, which agrees well  
with his Description: He compares her  
body to a Weelle, of all other creatures,  
smallest, fleakest, and straightest. After  
this, he goes to describe her Apparel;  
which suits so well with the artless curiosi-  
ty of that time, as every Line finds out one  
native Ornament to grace and beautifie her  
Attire. Her **Seint** studded, or Girdle,  
barred with Silk; her **Barm-cloath**, or  
Partlet, as white as morrow milk; her em-  
broidered **Smock**, her **Colere** of cole black  
Silk; the **Tapets** or Tassels of her white  
**Volupere**, Gorget or Stomacher, futed to  
the same colour; her **fillet** of Silk, and set  
full high.

And likerly, she had a likerous eie.

The

The eye is called Love's Dart. A wandering Eye discovers the affection of the heart. It seldom roams abroad, but it either takes, or is taken. What an **Index** is to a Book, is the Eye to the mind.

**F**ull small ipulled were her brows two,  
**A**nd they were bent, and black as any flo.

The Brow is the Beacon of Fancy. A bent Brow implies a soveraignty or command of Affection. A black brow, constancy of resolution.

**S**he was moch more blissful for to see,  
**T**hen is the new **P**erigenet tree, &c.

Here he sets forth the Amiableness of her person in sundry proper and familiar resemblances; wherein first, he Metonemically compares the cheerfulness of her countenance to the **P**erigenet-tree, for the fruit of that Tree. Secondly, The softness of her Skin, and tenderness of flesh, being that *Euryale* praised in her *Ulysses*, to **W**eather=wool; the Lustre of her complexion to **D**anaes Tower; the clearness of her voice to a **S**wallow; her nimbleness to a **K**id; the sweetness of her breath to **B**ra=ket

ket or **Methe**, or **Apples** laid in hay ;  
 her wantonness to a **Colt** ; her goodly proportion and presence , to a **Walste** ; her straightness, to a **Bolt**. From these, he descends to such Ornaments as she usually wore ; which ( no doubt ) received more grace from her, than she from them. With a Broch as broad as the Bos of a Buckler, was she adorned ; with shoes or Sandals laced : In a word, she was a **Ruinrose**, a peerless Paragon, a **Pigges nye**, a Bedfellow for any Lord, a Spouse for a good Yeoman. All this is so fully, freely, and familiarly expressed by him, as it shall need no farther illustration.

**Now** sir, and **est** sir, so bise the caas  
**That** one day this hend **Nicholas**  
**Fell** with this young wife to rage & pley  
**While** that her husband was at **Osney**.

Opportunity is the Bay or Port of Fancy ; many storms and billows did this amorous Scholar incessantly suffer ; sundry rubs and oppositions did he encounter ; before Opportunity waisted him to this long-expected harbour. **At Osney** ; an ancient Abbey, distant scarce half a mile west from *Oxford* ;  
 seated

seated in a Vale no less fruitful, than delightful, whose very Bels were formerly famous, in our old English Catches. To this **Oleney** was our Carpenter gone, leaving his Inmate Astronomer at home, to turn over his Books, and try whether the Signs were in **Aries** or no. Much water goes by the Mill, which the Miller little knows on; and some Chips must be cut by the Scholar, which our Carpenter little wots on. To be short, as Fancy cannot endure to be long; Our youthful Boorder boords his amorous Hostess, and that so familiarly, as it requires a Curtain, for the love of Modesty. Passionate are his Enter-breaths; affectionate his Protests; intimate his Love; desperate his Life; if he may not enjoy what he seems only to love, and without which, he desires not any longer to live. But relentless she seems, howsoever she means.

**She said, I woll not kiss thee by my fate,  
Why let be, quod she, let be Nicholas,  
O! I woll cry out, harrow and alaas, &c.**

True is that Maxim;  
*Follow Love, and she will fly you;  
Fly your Love, and she'l come nigh you.*

How



How far will some young Wenches seem  
 from taking, when they are most taken?  
 What a weak kind of wrestling they will  
 use? What an easie resistance they will  
 make? What a pattering with their Lips,  
 as if they would cry out?

*But our experienc'd youths do little fear them,  
 For if they cry, they'l cry that none may hear  
 them.*

But quite another course takes this our  
**Nicholas**; what he cannot win by a violent  
 Assault, he hopes to obtain by an easie  
 Parley: Nor is he frustrate of his hopes,  
 having prevail'd as he expected.

**This Nicholas** gan mercy for to crie,  
 And spake so fair, and profered her so fast  
 That she her love granted him at last.

This argued our Hostess **Alyson's** good  
 Nature, who would not be won by violence,  
 but by a more easie and affectionate tem-  
 per. She confirms her self his, and swears  
 by **S. Thom. of Kent** (an usual Oath in  
 those daies) that she will be at his command:  
 Provided, that Opportunity prevent all oc-  
 casion of Jealousie, to which infectious  
 Jaundise,



Jaundise her husband was infinitely subject.

**Day thereof care ye nat, quod Nicholas.**

*Alyson's* consent quickens *Nicholas* conceit: it rests now, that he contrive some plot, that he may with more conveniency branch the Carpenter's Pate. She accords to his device, and gives way to whatsoever he shall work. This, as it was their first amorous encounter, they express their mutual love in Lip-labour, hopeful promises of a succeeding favour: So the Poet observes:

*Who knows not, Lips are gates to those that woo?  
Which freely ope, grant farther entrance too.*

This Curtsie he requites with a pleasant new Tune on his Psaltery. Thus cheers she his Lip with her Kiss, he, her Ear with his Melody.

**Chan fell it thus, that to the parish  
Cherch**

**(Christs own works for to werch)  
This good wife went on an holy day;  
Her forhede shone, &c.**

C

Her:

Here he turns aside from the former subject he had in hand, and enters into another discourse; wherein, he first tels you of our Hostels repair to the Church; but in so trim and neat a dress, as by all probability she resorts rather to see and be seen, than hear and be taught; for fashion, than devotion: Afterwards, he descends to speak of the beauteous feature, and curious attire of the Parish-Clerk, *Absolon*.

**Now was there of the chirch a parish  
clerke,  
The which that was cleped Absolon,  
Troule was his heer, &c.**

In this description he glanceth at the pride of the Clergy; shewing how vanity began to strut within the Walls of a Monastery. For if a poor Parish-Clerk must be so curiously dressed, as to have his hair curled, and so womanishly disheveled, his eyes so effeminately pilled, his shooes artificially carved, and in all points so completely accoutred; what may we think of those, whose Revenues were greater, places higher, and whose persons, in the eye of the world, more popular? Such Poets, these corrupter

corrupter times require, to tax our Clergy boldly, where such who should be exemplary Practicers and Professors of humility, become too much Admirers of Apish Formality, and too serious followers of these shadows of Vanity.

But such witty Evasions have some of these, as I never see any of them, but they put me in mind of the pregnant and present Answer of that *Sprusado* to a Judge in this Kingdom, a rigid Censor of mens habits; who seeing a neat Finical Divine come before him in a Cloak lined through with Plush, thus encountred him: Sir, *You never read that Paul ever went in a Plush Cloak. But I read, My Lord, said he, that Paul left his Cloak at Troas, and whether that Cloak was lined through with Plush, or no, it is more (my word) than either you or I know.*

For to point at some of these both in Diet and Habit; in stead of *Locusts* and *Wild Honey*, they must (good men) content themselves with *Lobsters*, *Cramm'd Capons*, and *Coney*; and for *Raiments* of *Camels hair*, *Damask Cassocks* down to their heels; and for *Leathern Girdles* about their *Loyns*, *Formal Fashes*, or *Apostolical, Canon-*

*cal Roses*, to enamour their *Loves*; with  
*Downie Cushions* for their knees, in their  
 rare, short and sweet *Orisons* to their Lord :  
 But too tedious are such tasks for fat bellies.  
 We will go on with our Tale.

**A merry child he was, so God me save,  
 Well could he let blood, clip, and shave,  
 In twenty manner could he trip & daunce.**

An excellent description of a Parish  
 Clark ; it seems he was a jovial boy ; and  
 lest his too loose or irregular conversation  
 might bring him to a deprivation, and so  
 exclude him from the benefit of his Profes-  
 sion, he initiates himself sufficiently in other  
 Trades : He can play the Barber-surgeon,  
 in cases of necessity ; and keep a dancing  
 School to shew feats of his activity ; he can  
 play the Musician too, and make Taverns  
 and Tap-houses resound with his melody.

**This Absolon, that was joly and gaie,  
 Goeth with a Censer on a Sundae,  
 Censyng the wives of the parish faste  
 And many a lovely look on hem he cast,  
 And namely on this Carpenters wife, &c.**

A fit person for such a personal employ-  
 ment :

ment ; He carries a Censer for *Cupid's* Altar. Many Objects he eies ; sundry amiable presentments he views ; yet comparing them with this matchless *Alyson* , he holds them all inferiour beauties below comparison.

And Absolon his Geterne had itake  
 For Paramours he thought for to wake,  
 And forth he goth jolly and amercous  
 Till he came to the Carpen ers hous.

Long and tedious had this task been to *Absolon*, had he bestow'd it upon his devotion. Love's watchful eyes may be properly compared to those three *Hesperian* Sisters ; their Portels are never closed, but ever vigilant to prevent an intrusive Rival. Now are we to suppose him mounting the Carpenter's Wall, where, directly under the beauteous *Alyson's* window, who lay closely locked in the unweldy arms of her jealous husband : He chants out some amorous Roundelay, to which he tunes his melodious Gittern. Long had he not warbled in this manner, till the Carpenter awakes out of his Leaden slumber.



**This Carpenter awoke, and heard him  
sing,  
And spake unto his wife, and said anon  
What Alyson, heres thou not Absolon, &c.**

Hourly fears, daily frights, and incessant cares beget broken sleeps, short rests, and disquiet dreams. The Carpenter's head lay on so hard a pillow, being, as he thought, stuf with horn-shavings, as his sleeps could not be long. He awakes his *Alyson*, who, perhaps, was awake before he call'd her.

**And she answered her husband there-  
withal,  
Yes God wote John, I here it every dele,**

Notably did he express the effects of Fancy, who sung thus;  
*Th' Effects of pow'rful love, do best appear,  
When passion feeds the Eye, and fills the Ear.*

How our *Alyson's* affection was seated, or her senses sated, might hence be probably gathered: Like a second *Dulcina*, she seeming slept, but did not sleep; heard, yet would not hear. A favourable Gloss would interpret thus: She was loath to disquiet her diseased husband, or put a dis-



disgrace on this amorous Clark; this (as may be well imagined) begot in her a resolved silence. Nor will *Absolon*, though he receive small comfort in his suit, omit the least opportunity for *Alyson's* sake. He wooeth her incessantly, walks all the night long constantly, kembs his Locks curiously, price and prayer intercede for him powerfully, he vows to become her servant (in those daies a rare kind of Complement) he quavers in his musical Aires melodiously, he sends her Pymment, Methe, Wafers, and choicest Spices, to win her love with presents of delicacy; he shews her proofs of his Activity, and in Theatral actions personates *Herod* in his Majesty.

**But what availeth him, as in this caas  
She loved so, this hende Nicholas  
That Absolon may blow the Bucks  
hozne &c.**

All his labour is but in vain; fruitless are all these tasks; to no purpose his late watchings. These are but as if he striv'd to make the Blackamore white: This our Poet confirms with an usual Proverb in those daies.

Full sooth is this Proverb, it is no lye,  
 Men say right thus, alway the night lie  
 Maketh the ferre leafe.

As if he should say, Daily company passeth holiday love. *Absolon* hath too strong a Corrival of *Nicholas*, to prevail in his purchase. Long familiarity strengthened with domestick acquaintance, hath so firmly cemented their affections, as all this trim *Clark's* Rhetorick cannot dissolve it. Now is it high time for them to address themselves for their project.

And so befell it on a Saterday  
 This Carpenter was gone to *Olmaie*.

It may seem that he was Carpenter to the Abbey, by his usual resort thither: as sundry other Artificers were constantly retained, and by a yearly Pension tied, to repair any such ruines or decaies, as casually befel in the Abbey.

This *Nicholas* no lenger would tarie,  
 But doeth full soft unto his chamber  
 carie

Both meat and drink &c.

*Nicholas* becomes his own Purveyor,  
 and has now betaken himself to his Chamber,

ber, to devise some plot to deceive the Carpenter, and possess him of his dearest Paramour. Private he must be, and retired, and as one with an extasie surprized, lie gaping as if he were Planet-struck. Directions to this purpose are given to his *Alyson*, that the Plot may draw on to a fairer conclusion. All *Saturday* *Nicholas* mues himself up in his Chamber, where he bestows the day in his repast or repose; and so continues on in this his pleasant restraint till *Sunday* night: Which long restraint of *Nicholas* Liberty, drives our simple Carpenter into a marvelous perplexity.

**This selie Carpenter hath great merbeile  
Of Nicholas, of what thing might him  
eile,**

**And saied: I am a drazd by S. Thomas  
It stondeh not aright with Nicholas.**

He is now grown as jealous of *Nicholas* life, as he was before of his *Alyson's* Love. First, By falling into consideration of Man's frailty, he fears that he died suddenly; And this he holds more probable, by recalling to mind a Spectacle of Mortality which he had lately seen.

**I sato**

**I** saw to day a colse bozn to cher che  
**T**hat now on monday last **I** saw him  
 merche.

This confirms him in his fear : Longer he will not debate the matter ; forthwith he must be resolv'd what is become of *Nicholas*, of whose safety he becomes so suspicious. One then must be directed, and sent to his Chamber, to see what is acted.

**S**o up (qd he unto his knabe) anone  
**C**leape at his doze, & knock fast with a  
 stone.

On goes this rude Usher, to observe his Master's command : He cries shrilly, knocks stoutly, presseth him to answer boldly ; but *Nicholas*, as one taken with a Fit of Astrology, resolves him with silence. At last, lest he should leave his Master still in suspense, and so procure his displeasure, he seeks about till he finds an hole or passage, where a Cat us'd to creep in ; where he pries like a Cat for a Mouse.

**Till at the last he had of him a sight,  
This Nicholas late gaping ever upright,  
As he had keyked on the new mone.**

Here plays *Nicholas* the part of a profound Astronomer; and h'as one trick above *Ela*, wherein none of all his fellow-consorts or Astronomical Professants can ever come near him: For he by help of his prospective glass, can distinctly and apparently discover all the starry Regiment quite through the Roof of his Chamber. Howsoever, doubtless he **gapes** for some preferment, or else to make an Asterisme of his mouth, where some Constellation or other may certainly fix. This could not chuse but beget a wonderful amazement in this pitiful Spy.

**Adowne he goeth, & tolde his maister sone  
In what aray he saw this yllie man.**

This increased the number of his distracted fears, as may appear by the sequel: for presently upon return of this sad relation,

**This Carpenter to blissen him began  
And said: now helpe us sernt fridestolde.**

A Saint in those daies usually invoked,  
when



when any one was either blasted, bewitched, or by a spirit haunted. Divers are his conceits of *Nicholas*; sometimes he thinks that his much study hath made him mad; other sometimes, that he labours of some other Malady, & that now he is struck into a dangerous Extasie, which requires some present remedy. Amidst these various doubts and distempered fears, far more wisely than could be well expected from the concept of such an Head-piece, he imputes the cause of this distemper to his too curious search or enquiry after Gods Secrets.

**I thought aye well how it should be,  
When shouldest not know of Gods pri-  
vete &c.**

This he confirms with a late Accident.

**Right so fer'de another clerk with astro-  
nomy,  
He walked into the fieldes for to pry  
Upon the sterre, to wete what should be-  
fall,  
Till he was in a marlpit yfall.**

*Columella* observes, that man of all other Creatures, hath one Muscled to erect his Eye upward,

upward, whereas others are depressed, and  
 haled downward; yet this was not given  
 him to eye that which is concealed from  
 him. We are so to admire the Creature,  
 as in it we adore the Creator: We are so to  
 bestow the Eye of our outward man, as we  
 darken not our inward light: For by fix-  
 ing our Eyes too intently on Objects of  
 Secrecy, we may justly fear, lest we should  
 be consumed by the Beams of his Glory.  
 It is a good Lesson which that Sage so seri-  
 ously recommended to his Scholars; *Be not  
 wise overmuch; lest ye become ignorant in  
 that which you should know most.* But little  
 needed our Carpenter fear the depth of stu-  
 dy in his Astronomer. A better course  
 therefore he resolves of; and that is to cud-  
 gel him out of his humor, and so cure this  
 threatening distemper.

### Get me a Staffe.

Madness must be cured by Correction,  
 and spare Diet. Spare, did the Carpenter  
 think, were *Nicholas's* Commons; albeit,  
 he had better provision in his Knap-sack,  
 than he knew of. He means therefore to  
 correct his humour on the one side with  
 Bombasting,

Bombasting, as the Patient on the other side had practised on himself by Fasting,

**He shall out of his studieng, as I gesse,  
And to the chamber doze he gan him  
dresse.**

Though *Nicholas* might justly commence an action of forcible Entry against his unruly Host, where he was Farmer, during the Lease of his Chamber; seeing his door raised from the Hasps, his deep studies disturbed, his Astronomical slumber disquieted, and all things topsie-turvy turned, yet would not he budge a foot, but like one made up in Wainscot,

**This Nicholas late as still as any stone,  
And ever gaped upward into the eire &c.**

This troubles *John* Carpenter more than all the rest; who verily thinks that he is either fallen into despair, and therefore, like a discreet Monitor, puts him in remembrance of some devout meditation, by awaking him from that Lethargy or amazed distraction. Or else, that he is forespoken, or blasted by some ill Spirit, which makes him use his Charm to cure this mischance.

I crouch the from elves, & from wicked  
 wights;  
 Therewith the night spell he said anon  
 rights,  
 On four halbes of the house about,  
 And on the dorchfold of the doze without.

Here he repeats the Night-charm used  
 in those daies, when they shut their doors  
 at night, and opened them in the morning:  
 Confirmed by that old Sylvane Charm,

*Fawns and Fairies keep away,  
 While we in these Coverts stay;  
 Goblins, Elves, of Oberon's Train,  
 Never in these Plains remain,  
 Till I and my Nymph awake,  
 And do hence our Journey take,  
 May the Night-mare never ride us,  
 Nor a fright by night betide us:  
 So shall Heav'ns praise sound as clear,  
 As the shrill voyc'd Chantecleer.*

Scarcely could *Nicholas* keep his counte-  
 nance, when he heard the Carpenter run  
 so glib with his Spels: But having indent-  
 ed with his Face, not to blush, with his  
 Eye, to look up, and his Tongue, to be  
 mute,

mute ; with a constant boldness, a fixt amazedness, and a resolved silence, he performs his Plot, that at night he may enjoy his Place.

**And at the last this hende Nicholas  
Can for to like soze, and sain alas,  
Shall all this world be lost ?**

Now is *Nicholas* awak'd out of his Trance, and to the Carpenter's great grief, discovers what he has seen in his Astronomical Dream. Which, at first, his Host seems to slight, wishing him to **think on God**.

**This Nicholas answered, fetch me  
Drinke,  
And after woll I speke in priuete  
Of certain things, that toucheth the  
and me.**

Though *Nicholas*'s Vision was moist, his mouth was dry ; down goes the Carpenter to quench the Astronomer's thirst ; and now returning with a large Quart of mighty Ale, that might compare with **Stingo**, for it would **cut a feather**, they toss'd the Cannikin lovingly one to another : Which done, and having set the Carpenter by him,

*Nicholas*



*Nicholas* begins ; yet before he has well entered into his sad Story, the door being first shut, he solemnly swears his Host to keep counsel in a secrecy of such high consequence ; for should he discover what he imparted ; his light discovery would be thoroughly revenged.

**May Christ it forbid for his holy blode,  
And tho this sely man, I am no blabbe &c.**

Now he begins to give better ear to this heavy relation ; and vows to be secret, upon any condition.

**Now John (qd Nicholas) I woll not lye  
I have yfounded in mine Astrologye &c.**

A deep red Yonth, and such an one as will not stick to belie his knowledge, rather than want Admirers. Amongst those then may he be well numbred, who pretend a familiar knowledge to all the Houses of Heaven, and yet can scarce pay house-rent for their own. See how his Banks overflow ! He discovers the time of this dangerous Deluge to a minute. The Rain which fell at *Noah's Flood*, was but an *April* shower to this Inundation : Within one hour

D

mult

must the whole World be drowned, only those few saved, which by his rare and mysterious Art are preserved. The weakly-credulous Carpenter believes him; having never seen the **Bow** in the **Cloudes**, or never heard for what **Token** of **Covenant** it was given.

**Thus shall mankind Drenche, and lese her life,**

**This carpenter answered and said, alas my wife!**

**And shall she Drenche? Alas mine Alyson &c.**

There is nothing perplexeth him so much as the loss of his dear *Alyson*. Pity it were, thinks he, that so prety a Morſel of flesh should go the way of all Fish. So as never till now begins he to provide for his own safety, Wife, and Family.

—— **Is there no remedy in this caas?**

As if he should say, Alas, my learned Guest *Nicholas*, must we be all meat for Had-docks? No remedy? no means of safety? 'Las, for my self I care not so much; for I have the one foot i'th grave already; I am  
not

not a man long for this world : But that my *Alyson*, who is in the very flower and prime of her time, the very Daisie and Honey-suckle of her time, that she should become Provender for a Sea-horse, or lodge in the Guts of a Whale, it would make any ones heart yern within him, that has any man's blood in him. Besides, for her Age, she may have many pretty **Chips** when I am gone. O then, good Guest *Nicholas*, provide for her safety, if not for mine. Who knows not, but if you two can agree, she may be meat for you, when I am Worms-meat. Thus might the poor Carpenter seem to have expostulated with his learned Astronomer ; as one desirous to receive some small comfort from this profound Artist, which might minister a remedy in cases of such urgent necessity : and afford to his *Alyson* (whom he preferred before all his Family) some promising hopes of safety.

**Is there no remedy ?**

**Yes, yes, full good (qd hende Nicholas)**

Now begins he to lay his Lime-twigs more cunningly : He gives the deluded Carpenter directions how to prevent this

imminent danger : He repeats unto him the story of *Noah's* deliverance. Nothing is to be undertaken rashly, without serious advice and deliberation; yet in regard both of the apparency and imminency of that danger, he adviseth him to take some speedy course, that the peril may be seasonably prevented, and their safeties procured.

**This asketh hast, and of an hasty thing  
 When may not preche, ne make taryng ;  
 Anon go get us fast into this inne  
 A kneding trow, or else a kemelin,  
 For ech of us.**

Here must the Carpenter be sent his Errand : He must provide Materials for his security. Though every Tub be to stand upon his own bottom, every one must not strike on his own Tub. Thus is this Carpenter appointed to become Purveyor against this great Deluge. And Love makes all tasks light ; for, not the fear of death, but the Love of his dear *Alyson*, which he preferred before his own life, quickens his wind-gall'd feet, to prevent all occasion of fear. But this dark and mysterious Artist

*Nicholas,*

*Nicholas*, adviseth him withal, that in no case he discover this secrecie, either to his man *Robin*, or his maid *Gille*; for they are barred by name from all hope of safety: Neither is it fitting that he should be too inquisitive touching Gods privacies, touching the preservation of some, and subversion of others. Let it suffice him, that these means are provided for the deliverance of himself and his *Alyson*.

**Go now thy way.**

The Troughs now are to be provided, and sufficiently victualled, with Hatchets to cut them down from the roof where they are to be tied, when the Flood hath once entred. A passage too must be made for these marvellous Barges through the main Wall into the Garden.

**Thou shalt thou swim as mery I undertake**

**As doeth the white Ducke after her Drake.**

A proper and familiar comparison. Two especial inducements there were which moved this careful Carpenter to address him to his laborious Task: The first was, Security.



curity. The Second, Sovereignty.

*Light is that Labour which may safety bring,  
In doubtful acts, fear's an ingenious thing.*

That the Carpenter likewise aspired to Sovereignty, might be probably gathered by that comfortable hope of an universal Monarchy, which *Nicholas* suggested to him.

**And than we shall be Lordes all our life  
Of all the world, as was Noe and his  
wife.**

This sets the Carpenter upon his Panto-  
fles; while the Learned Clerk *Nicholas* ad-  
viseth him by all means, that when every  
one is to enter into their Roof-trough or  
Kimelyn, none speak one to another, but  
with a constant and reserved silence remain  
as still as the Night. *John* must not speak  
to his *Alyson*, nor *Alyson* to her *John*. Be-  
sides, these Kneading Tubs must be divi-  
ded by equal distance one from another.  
Thus is the Plot contrived, and no less suc-  
cessfully continued. The Carpenter's Cre-  
dulity promiseth a fair issue to this Torrent  
of Astronomy.

**This**

This ordinaunce is said, go god the  
 speed,  
 To morrow at night, whan men ben all  
 a slepe,  
 Into our kneding tubbs wolle we creep.

Love will creep where it cannot go. Dark  
 and straight is that Crany, through which  
 Love cannot find out a way. By this, you  
 may collect, how the Carpenter hath his  
 Commission sealed, his Pasport granted,  
 and all things facilitated for so terrible an  
 Occurrent.

This sely carpenter goth forth his way  
 full ofte he said alas, and welaway,  
 And to his wife he told his pribete,  
 And she was ware, and knew it bet than  
 he.

Notwithstanding his great hast, he will  
 take so much time, as to impart this Secre-  
 cy to his dearest *Alyson*; who, as she was  
 known to the Plot, conjures him by all  
 those Professions of Love which he had ever  
 vow'd her, to follow the Advice of their  
 Learned Guest: She cunningly aggravates  
 all those seeming occasions of Fear, which

wrought strongly enough already on the Carpenter's Imagination, so as it little needed any re-impression.

**This sely carpenter beginneth to quake,  
Him thinketh verily that he may see  
Noes floodde come waltring as the see &c.**

Such strange effects works a possessed fear. He considers not the improbability of this Relation, but seemingly apprehends the present approach of this Fanatical Deluge, with all those menacing dangers which accompany it: Yet must not this fear foreflow, but accelerate his dispatch. The three Tubs are provided, Victuals purveyed, and these necessary Store-houses in the Roof reared. Besides, that all things might be with more secrecy carried, *Robin* and *Gylle* are removed, and to *London* upon a sleeveless Errand directed.

**And on the mondy, whan it drew to night,  
He sette his doore, without candel light,  
And dressed all thing, as it should be  
And shortly clomben up all thre.**

He had purposely fixed sundry Rings or wooden Pins, by which, as by stairs or  
stalks,

stalks they might climb into their Tubs: Where, with a constant and continued silence, they lay closely immured; while the Carpenter lay trembling and shaking, hourly expecting this fearful Inundation: But *Nicholas* and *Alyson* ever thirsting and longing for the Carpenter's good rest, that with the active joyes of Love they might seal their Affection. The Carpenter applies himself to his Devotion, as if he and all the world were near their dissolution; But these two amorous souls pray for nothing more, than his rest, and their recreation.

**The deed slepe, for wery besinesse  
fel on this carpenter, right as I gesse  
About curfewe time.**

The many employments to which this Carpenter stood engaged, had with a various Medley of Cares and Fears so over-wearied him, that as one now resolved to sleep out that small scantling of time which is left him, about Cock-crow he bids a silent good-night to Learned *Nicholas*, and Lovely *Alyson*.

*Love's*

*Love's eyes are open, and can take no sleep,  
While aged Eyes their Leaden Slumber keep.*

Which security gives them opportunity ;  
He snorts not so fast in his Tub, but they  
hast as fast to leave their Tubs, and go to  
bed.

**And down of the ladder than stalketh Ni-  
colay.**

**And Alyson full softe after she spedde,  
Without words mo, they went to bedde.**

As this Feat was by both equally plotted,  
so are they now in the conclusion mutually  
pleased. The Carpenter's Age enjoys  
more rest than their youth. Let night's sable  
Curtain enskreen these dark actions. Lust's  
Palace hath but very few minutes of con-  
tenting solace. They may sate Sense for a  
time, but never satisfie Reason with an in-  
hibited touch. We are now to retire a  
little from this Discourse, and descend to  
our love-enthralled *Absolon*, who desires  
nothing more, and hopes to deserve no-  
thing less, than to enjoy fair *Alyson's* Love :  
To whom he addresseth his course.

**This**



This parish clerke, this amarous Absolon

That is for love alway for two begon :

Upon the monday was at Osenay

With company, him to dispozte and play.

If God have his Church, the Devil will have his Chappel ; yea and his Chaplain too. *Absalon* repairs to the Abbey of *Osenay*, where he employs the day, not in Devotion, but in a serious inquisition after *John* the Carpenter, and his beloved *Alyson*. Private conference he hath with a Cloysterer, in whose relation he conceives infinite pleasure. For by his means he receives Intelligence of the Carpenter's absence from home : Which opportunity chalkes out a seasonable time for *Absolon's* Jubilee.

Some maner comfort shall I have partake

My mouth hath itched all this long daie

That is a signe of kissinge at the least

All night me mette eke, that I was at a feast

Therefore I woll go slepe an hour or twey  
And al the night then woll I walke and  
pley.

He

He conjectures by the itching of his mouth, that he shall be graced at least with a Kiss; which prediction he found most true, as you shall read in the Tale hereafter. It is most certain, what the Comedian sometimes wittily observed: *We dream by night what we most think of by day.* This youthful Quirister meditated of nothing so much all the day long, as of Kissing Comfits, and luscious Feastings. And these were the Subjects of his Dreams. In the amorous discoursing and discussing whereof, he sets this up for his Rest: He will go sleep an hour or two, that he may more ably turn Night-walker, or more properly, Eave-dropper. For *Alyson's* Chamber-window must be his Rendevouz; where he resolves to sing his Apocryphal Catches.

**When that the first cocke hath crow  
anon  
Up rise this joly lover Absolon.**

He sleeps not his business. And to make himself better accepted, at **pynt-Devisé** must his Body be attired; his Breath, to cure all rankeness, must be with Cloves, Granates, and Lycorice sweetned; his hair daintily

daintily trimmed and tressed, under his  
Tongue a **true-lobe** Flower couched, to  
make his **Designs** more auspicious, himself  
to his Love more gracious. Up to the Car-  
penter's house he hyeth, where he stayeth,  
and sueth.

**What do ye honnycombe, swete Alyson?**  
**My fayre birde, my swete sinamome.**

How this dapper youth melts with Love!  
His amorous Oration is all Honey and Cy-  
namon: He calls her his Honey-comb, and  
she makes him her Coxcomb. Then he de-  
scends to speak of that uncessant anguish  
of mind that he suffers. Like a Lamb after  
his Dam goes he bleating; like a Turtle  
for his Mate waits he mourning: as a Maid  
without meat sits he fasting; yet for all  
this, like a Calf she discards him.

**Go fro the window, Jack foole, she said,**  
**As helpe me god, and swete saint Jame**  
**I love another, oz els I were to blame**  
**Well bet than the (by Jesu) Absolon**  
**Go forthe thy way, oz I woll cast a stone.**

This sweet Cynamon Clark is properly  
rewarded; she vows to stone him, quite  
contrary

contrary to his expectance. She prefers the Stars before the Quire. Her *Nicholas* she enwreaths and enjoys; mean time let the poor Quirister chant his humming Catch to the Seven Stars: Let him cool his Toes in Moonshine, while she is rid of him she loaths, and enjoys him she loves. Yet, lest *Absolon* should be numbred among those weak wooers, who relinquish their Suit upon the first repulse, he rears his Battery, though with a more easie sollicitancy, than he did at first.

**Alas qd Absolon, and welaway  
That true love was eber so yuel bysette  
Than kisse me, sin it may be no bet &c.**

He remembers, it seems, the preface of his *itching lips*; the height of his amorous Ambition is now confin'd to a Kiss. All his Night-labour is now brought to Lip-labour. Which Suit our beauteous *Alyson*, in meer compassion, rather than any affection to his person, thus answers,

**Wilt thou than go thy way therewith qd  
She?  
Ye certes lemman, qd this Absolon.**

Small

Small favours would not be neglected, because they may be Introductions to higher Curtsies when occasion is offered. Mean time *Absolon* prepares his Cynamon mouth for a tast of an unfavoury Curtsie. He takes his corporal Oath of his constant fidelity, and makes *Alyson's Posteriors* the Book he swears by. Whence observe, with what intollerable petulancy she jeers the poor Cloysterer! All this while, you may imagine, *Nicholas* slept not; but heard this untoward Dialogue, after his long wished, wooed, and now enjoyed amorous encounter. To whom she imparts her Plot, which he approves, and she effects.

The window she undoth, and that in  
haste

Have do (qd she) and speede the fast

Let not our neighbours thee espy.

This Absolon gan wipe his mouth full  
drie

A civil preparation for an uncivil salutation. Now at last he perceives how something ever hath some favour: but small sweetness tastes he in her too low curtisie, under favour.

Abacke



**A**backe he sterte, and thought it was  
amis.

His Experience had inform'd him sufficiently in the knowledge of a Woman's Lip : This had not that smoothness which he expected. Yet (quoth he) I may be deceiv'd. Dame *Alyson* may have an hair-lip, for ought that I know : While he thus expostulated the case,

**T**e he qd she, and clapt the window to

*Te he*, a word of disgrace, scorn, or contempt : She laughs at him after she had galled him : Before she shut the window to, had she shut her back-door too, *Absolon* had receiv'd the greater Curtsie, and she exprest the more Civility. But being thus, not only rejected, but disgraced ;

**A**bsolon goeth forth a sozꝝ paas  
A berde, a beꝝde, said hende *Nicholas*.

*Nicholas* has a fine world on't ; his Host is incaged, his Hostess in his arms inclosed, his Corriual discarded, and new conceits arising, other contents hourly devised.

**T**his

**This sely Absolon herde it ebery dele  
 And on his lippe he gan for angre bite  
 And to himselfe he said, I shall the quite**

The Worm will turn again. Poor *Absolon* thus abused, of his sleep deprived, casts about in his mind how he may be revenged. He cannot endure to sit down with this wrong : his Fancy is now changed into a Frenzy ; his Love to Revenge. Many had he serv'd, yet was he never so answered ; many had he lov'd, yet never so rewarded ; many had he kist, yet never any Lip that so relished. His Passion in the end works it self into a vertuous compassion.

**for he was healed of his maladye  
 full ofte Paramours he gan Desie  
 And wepe as doth a childe that is ybete.**

What rare Effects will the apprehension of a conceived disgrace produce ? First, It dictates of revenge ; then it begets an inbred hate to the Object before loved, and by whom the disgrace was occasioned : After all this, it resolves into tears, till opportunity be offered, that the intended revenge may be inflicted.

**A** softe pace he went over the strete  
**U**nto a smith men callen Dan Gerbeys &c.

*Abfolon* having received such rough entertainment in *Venus* Court, flies for revenge to *Vulcan's* Forge: Where he beats his Brain intollerably, about the manner of his Revenge. Stronger is his desire, than his conceit; yet becomes that so quickned by passion, as now he aspires to execute, what his doubtful Imagination hath so many several waies projected. His Pate is his Anvile, the Forge his Study; so as, I may properly apply those antient Verses, upon this occasion, to our Truant Chantery-man.

*That Scholar well deserves a Widdie,  
 Who makes his Study of a Smiddie.*

Well; Suppose him now cooling his Toes at the Blacksmith's door, as he had done before to his dainty Paramour. Thus flies he for refuge to this *Lemnian*, to be revenged on his *Lemman*: True it is;

*When Vulcan and the Muses meet,  
 Safely may Mars warm Venus Feet.*

But secure is *Gervase* of any such Over-  
 ture. **This**

**This Absolon knocketh all easily  
And said unto Gervase &c.**

He knocks easily, lest he should be discovered, and consequently his plotted Revenge defeated; or else, that he should not for a Night-walker be publicly noted.

**What who art thou?**

*Smug* the Smith, it seems, was at work; or else of a light sleep.

**I am I Absolon.**

This he utters softly through a Cranny, lest it should come to discovery.

**What Absolon,**

**— Sum gay gyrl god it wote  
Hath brought you thus.**

It seems this Chanterer was a notable Tarrier; and generally observed for an inordinate walker. But little cares *Absolon* for this aspersion: **He had more Tow on his Distaste.** His head was otherwise employed; his Brain otherwise exercised. Revenge was his dearest Minion, which he preferred before the Embrace of a Wanton.

—Friend so Dere  
 The hote culter, in the chynney here  
 As lebe it me,

The Smith of antient acquaintance, would be loath to deny him so ordinary a Curtsie: were it of Gold, or Nobles in a Bag, he would lend it him: Albeit, he wonders what employment he may have for it at so unseasonable a time; but he receives it, upon promise to return it, with relation next morning how he did employ it.

And caught the culter by the cold stele  
 Full softe out at the Doze gan he stele.

Now he renews his siege with Fire and Faggot: Up to the **Carpenter's wall** he mounteth, and at *Alyson's* window he knocketh. She, who lay waking, as one fearful of her own security, or doubtful of her Husband's Jealousie, or over-joy'd with *Nicholas's* sweet Company, answers him presently, but timerously, as if he were some Thief; while he, to free her from that suspition, and make better way to his intended revenge, shapeth her this Reply.



I am thyn Absolon, thyn own Derling  
Of golde (qd he) I have the brought a  
ring.

A modern Poet sometimes Sung :

*There's nought a young man can devise,  
Will tempt a Woman more than prize.*

Upon which grounds builds he his project ; He tenders her a Ring which his own Mother ( *Eris* Mother of Revenge ) bequeathed him, and that curiously Engraven, and this will he give, so far he seems surpriz'd with love for one poor kiss. *Nicholas* is risen, and he will have it, and as uncivilly requite him for it. For, thought he, shall mine Hostess exceed me in conceit ? she put a palpable disgrace upon him, and I will do the like.

And ope the window did he hastily &c.

Here our Astronomer lyes his Level, and dischargeth his shot with a powder ; while our Chanterer is prepared with his red hot Cultre.

**And he was redy with his yron hote  
And Nicholas in the arse he smote.**

He has got a Ring with a witness. Lust must ever have a rue rub. He who even now, so lasciviously wantonned, and so freely tasted delights prohibited; he who surfeited in pleasures, and had hung up his abused Host for a Scare-crow, see how he is scarrified!

**Of goeth the skin an hondbiede about  
The hotte cultoz bzende so his tonte.**

Here's a Plaister for his pleasure. He that tastes the Sweet, must have the Sowr we'te. He rageth, raveth, and roareth like another *Oetean Hercules*. He can rest in no place, so sharp is his Inflammation; he can repose in no place, so deep is his Incision; So small is the Solace he now conceives in his *Alyson*.

**Helpe, water, water, for goddes hert.  
This carpenter out of his slumber sterte.**

What this deep Soothsayer prediction'd before in jest, he now calls for in earnest. Little dream'd he, when he foretold of that  
general

general inundation , that he should stand in need of some of it to cool his inflammation. But no sooner had he sent forth this piteous clamour, than the poor Carpenter, who lay snorting all this while in his suspended Trough , and had taken more rest though less pleasure, than his Guest, began to rouse himself out of his slumber ; and fearing the imminency of danger , with his axe he smites the Cord in two , by which his kimmel or Tub was tyed ; that so he might by a passage purposely made through his Garden, slice the depths, and so lanch into the Main Ocean.

**And down goeth all.**

Down goes the Carpenter , down goes Tarboord, Larboord, Ship, Tackling, and all his Provision.

-----**Till he came to the Cell**

**Upon the floze, and there a swoone he lay  
Up stert than Alison and Mend Nicholas.**

He never left tumbling till he came to the Cellar floor ; and now senseless, what with the Fall, and what with fear ; he lies in a Swoun. This Fall from his Roost, frights

them from their Rest. This unexpected accident rouseth and raiseth fair *Alyson* and her unfortunate *Nicholas* ; who (as may be supposed) might walk in his Shirt , for any rest he could take , since his late Lecture read him on his *Posteriora's* ; yea, and one who stood in more need of a Plaister, than any such Panick Distemper. But need makes the old wife trot. Some Plot must they devise or other, or they stand disgraced for ever. With joynt consent therefore, they raise a clamour in the streets, call their Neighbours together, to view this doleful Spectacle of a distracted Carpenter : for all must be imputed to his distemper.

**The neighbours, both small and grete  
In ronne---**

It is the condition of Common people to press into the view of such Novels, be they never so disastrous. Yea, we shall observe how the most contemptible wretch, who before was never eyed, if he chance to be wounded in the Street, with what numbers of vulgar Spectators he becomes forthwith enclosed : So attentive be their Ears, so intentive their Eyes to become Nuntio's of others

others miseries. Here then you may suppose this Common Rout standing in a Ring or Circle, gazing and admiring the unfortunately-deluded Carpenter like a blind point in the midst of a Centre, weakly languishing : while this rustick and uncivilized fry, ready to hear what *Nicholas* and his *Alyson* were as ready to report ; gave all attention to the sad, but feigned relation of this woful accident. No matter, though the poor Carpenter interrupt them, his Tale must not so much as be heard by them. Their Story was the first, and it must be best heard.

**They told every man, that he was wood  
He was agast so of Noyes flood.**

Alas good man ! what a Solemn discourse they make of his Frenzy, to palliate the rankness of their inordinate Fancy : With more than frontless impudence they avouch, that it was the Carpenter's distempered conceipt, that brought himself to this misfortune. For standing in great fear of a second *Noah's Flood*, which out of his own brain-sick Phantasie, he had long time conceited, to prevent all ensuing danger, he had caus-  
ed



ed to be provided one *Kimelyn* for himself, and other two for them to hang for Company, with all necessary provision against the violence of such an approaching Inundation. This were they enforced, for peace sake, to condescend to, being neither willing to incur his Displeasure, nor cross the Fury of his incorrigible humor. This merry Relation changeth the common peoples Admiration into Laughter; they jeer the lame Carpenter, and by their light Credulity vindicate two Wantons from dishonour. Though he vow and swear, they have vowed not to hear. That Beast of many heads will not credit this Beast of one head. They applaud the Jest, and asperse on him the disgrace.

Thus was *Alyson* cheared, *Nicholas* cheated, *Absolon* revenged, *John* the Carpenter gulled, and the Spectators infinitely pleased. Nor is it to be doubted, but if this Accident had not hapned, *Nicholas* or *Alyson* would have found one trick or other, to have deluded the Carpenter, enjoyed their Pleasure, and evaded Danger. And none in my judgment more probable than this; to wit, that when this supposed Deluge had

not

not come according to the time limited, Nicholas out of a dissembled Zeal, would have pretended, how by the incessancy of his Prayers, Heaven's wrath was appeased, their Cataracts stopped, and this universal Overflow till an other season stayed. Howsoever, by the sweet Harmony which all this Family afterwards enjoyed, as may be charitably supposed, our Comment upon this Tale shall be in these Verses finally closed.

*The Cloud's dispers'd, the Floud or Deluge past,  
And Absolon of wanton become chaste,  
John to his Alyson is reconcil'd,  
And Shee, perhaps, by Nicholas with Child,  
John doth his jealous humor quite disdain,  
What Alice did, she will not do again.  
" Heav'n Smiles, Earth joyes, when all things  
fall amending,  
" And Tragick Acts have such a Comick  
ending.*

---

A Com-

---



*A Commentary upon Chaucer's  
Prologue to the Wife of  
Bath's Tale.*



**E**xperience, though none au-  
thoritie &c.

This *English Homer*, our in-  
comparable *Chaucer*, here  
brings in an antient Wife of  
*Bath*, with an Old Wives Tale, yet not so  
old as true, seeing her own **E**xperience  
had confirm'd, whatsoever her tongue ex-  
press'd: wherein she draws the first occasion  
of her discourse, from the griefs which  
accompany a Married life; being either  
weary of their present choice, and conse-  
quently affecting change; or being depriv-  
ed of their choice, brings upon them new  
discontents,

discontents, by an untowardly change. Then she discourseth of the number of Husbands which she had since her Twelve years of Age. Wherein, she presseth an Argument against such, as held opinion against Bygamy.

**That sithen Christ went never but onis  
To wedding, in the Cane of Galilee &c.**

As if she should say, albeit Christ, who honoured Marriage with the very first Miracle that ever he wrought upon Earth, never went to any Wedding but once, and that in *Cane of Galilee*, will you hence conclude, that we are never to marry more than once, and so exclude Bigamy? So might you infer (upon like consequence) because Christ never scourged Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple but once, nor was tempted in the Desert (for ought we read) but once, nor wept over *Hierusalem* more than once, that neither sacrilegious Symonists are more than once to be scourged, nor temptation more than once to be suffered, nor tears of compassion more than once to be tendred. Nay, to refell this erroneous Opinion, which, even some of the antient  
Fathers

Fathers of the primitive Church have with too much pertinacy held, this good old wife of *Bath* hath an Argument in store for her own purpose, which she borrows from the very Touchstone of Truth, the holy Scripture.

——— **Jesu god and man**  
**Spake in reprove of the Samaritan**  
**Thou hast had five husbands ———**

Whence she proves, that in those daies there was no such restraint, but that it was usual and lawful for any one to marry after the Decease of their Husband: Albeit, we find it commended by Apostolical Authority, and recommended to Posterity, That those only were to be honoured for Widows, who were Widows indeed. True it is, that in this place here alledged by our Wife of *Bath*, this *Samaritan* was reprov'd, not for that she had married five Husbands, but for that after their Deaths, she had taken her self to one who was not her Husband; with whom, till then, she had lived without remorse of Conscience in all Incontinence. Albeit, that any one should be restrained to a prescript number either of  
Wives



Wives or Husbands, it was yet never heard. Not to insist therefore upon the difficulty of the Text, nor to play Schole-Divine, which would ill beseem one of her Sex, she makes use of a Text far more easie and proper for her purpose.

But well I wote expresse without lie  
 God hadde us for to wete and multiplie  
 That gentill Text can I well under-  
 stand &c.

She could find in her heart to multiply in Husbands as well as Children. One of the Ends of Marriage she observes, and this she embraceth with so free admittance, as her Age must not deprive her of hope to multiply: Husbands therefore she holds necessary Associates in all Ages, as well for Recreation as Procreation; being for their Love to leave whatsoever they most tenderly love. Parental Love is excluded, where Wedlock is admitted. Neither Bigamy, nor Octogamy (if Wives become their Husbands Survivors) are to be questioned. The last is no sooner committed to earth, than a new one is to be sought for on earth. Love and Youth, no nor Age, if it have a Colts tooth,

tooth, can converse with Ghosts and Goblins. This she confirms by Instance.

**To he the wise king Salamon  
I trow had wives mo than on  
As would God it leful were to me  
To be refreshed halfe so ofte as he.**

She holds it an honour to encrease in this Number; and by variety to allay satiety. Whence, she reflects upon her own former estate, and highly joys in her interchange of choyce.

**Blessed be God, I have had five  
Of which I have pyked out the best  
Both of their nether purse, and eke their  
Chest.**

She provides her self of a Husband to fit every sense, that she might more sensibly enjoy what she did by all likelihood most affect. That she might attain the end, she neglects not the means: No Procreation without Action. She holds it fit therefore to share in his Ability of Person, as well as Fortune. And because Practice begets Perfection, she loves ever to be in ure: She finds far more Advantage in dispatch, than delay:

delay; Her old Husband must no sooner be  
 dispatch'd, than a new one must be catch'd :  
 Thus is she ever mated and matched.

**Of five husbands scolyng am I  
 Welcome the sixte when ever he shall dy.**

The thought is taken : All flesh is mortal ; but of all flesh, she would have none more mortal than her husbands. She would ever have her aged Husband look like Death's-head ; mean time, her sage Admonitions are never wanting, to bid him remember his end. Life is but a Trouble ; but of all others, she is most troubled with his Life. Thus dictates she of her Husband's Pilgrimage ; which, by how much the shorter, it is for her all the better. A new Change is her Royal Exchange : Nor is the Market so scarce, but she hopes to fit her turn with a new Choice. Mean time, you may hence perceive, that she would have her Husband's Life of any Stuff rather than *Perpetuano* or *Sempiternum*. Like a charitable Wife, she could wish with all her heart that his Soul were at rest, while she were left to the Cares of the World and the Flesh ; for both which, she would so

F

season-

seasonably provide, that as Fortune, and her late Husband's Providence had sufficiently furnish'd her for the one, so she would take especial care that she were not famish'd in the other. This she confirms, not only with her own Opinion, but by Apostolical Doctrine.

For than the Apostel saith, that I am  
fre  
To wedde a godeshalfe, where it liketh  
me &c.

This likewise she strengthens, to give freer scope to her own Affections, with a fresh current of new Instances.

What recketh me though folke say vil-  
lany  
Of Shrewd Lameth, and of his bigamy? &c.

Here she makes a Rehearsal of sundry persons (and some of them antient holy Patriarchs, as *Abraham* and *Jacob*) who had divers wives: and in the end, proceeds farther, discoursing of the state of Virginitie; which was recommended by way of Counsel, and no expresse Precept, by the Apostle; concluding:

He said, thereof p̄cept had he none  
 When may counsaile a woman to be one  
 But counsailling is no commaundement  
 He put it in our own judgement.

To all which, she addeth this enforcing  
 Reason :

For had God commaunded maidenhede  
 Then had he dampned wedding out of  
 Drede.

Virginitie to have the p̄cedency is admitted, but not that Wedlock should be rejected. To live a Virgin is an extraordinary gift: This, she acknowledgeth, her weakness could never attain to. The use of this Doctrine therefore, she thus applies unto her self:

And for to ben a wife, he gave me leave  
 Of indulgence, so it be not to rep̄be  
 To wedde me, if that my make die  
 Without exception of bigamie.

This Doctrine she approves, for it relisheth sweetly to her Palat. Yea but hence there ariseth another Objection; It is not good to touch a woman. To which she



answers ; not inordinately or licentiously :

**For peril is, both fire and to be assem-  
ble.**

It is good for young Folk to avoid occasion ; for it is that which breeds a Contagion. The Fire of Fancy needs no Oyl to inflame it, nor any other Fewel to feed it, than Opportunity, which never comes uninvited. True it is (saith she) that many there are who can live Maidens all their daies ; and these prefer Chastity before any man's Society : And much good may it do them. For my own part, I find no such strength in my self ; my Frailty requires a Fellow-helper.

**For well ye know, a lord in his household  
Hath nat every vessel all of gold  
Some be of tre.**

All be not of one temper in their disposition, though of one Mould in respect of their composition. All are not to be Lillies of Chastity ; for so in short time should the world become a Desert. Vessels there are in one House of different Metals and Tempers ; yet those which are of the contemptiblest

temptiblest substance, are for use and service.

**Virginite is great perfection  
And continence eke.**

Some of our antient Fathers have compared Virginitie to Gold, Continence to Silver: Both of excellent esteem, albeit the former incomparably to be preferred before the later. But all have not the gift of Chastity, I mean, of Virgin-purity. Many things are in holy Writ unto our Observance offered and recommended, which are not expressly observed. Other things there are by expresse Precept to some more especially commended and commanded, whereof others may seem to be freed and exempted, at least, not so straitly enjoined.

—— **Christ, that of perfection is well  
Badde not every wight he should go sell  
All that he had** ——

He was a young man to whom Christ gave this Command; one neither charged with Family nor Progeny. And in him, directing his speech to all such, as were resolv'd to leave the world, and retire from all

earthly cares, that they might attain Perfection, by inuring themselves in these Tabernacles of Clay, to an Angelical Conversation. These were with *Mary* to be speculatively affected; mean time those *Martha's*, who were troubled about many things, were not for their provident Care in domestick affairs, altogether condemned. Both in their degrees being respectively approved.

**I** will bestow the flower of all myn age  
In the acts and fruit of marriage.

She will lose no time. Let others be Saints for her; she knows what she was made for: These Members (saith she) of Generation, were not made only for emission and evacuation, but likewise for Conception and Procreation; Nor only for distinction sake, to know Male from Female, but that Male should be known by Female.

**Why should men else in her bokes set  
That man should yeld to his wife her  
dette**

**How wherewith should he pay his pay-  
ment?**

**If he ne used his sely instrument.**

Husbands are to give their wives due benevolence; but how should they receive their Benevolence, if they wanted the instrumental means? There was nothing made in vain, much less that main and principal Point, without which, to this wanton widow, all the world were not worth a Point. True it is, and she confesseth it, that there have been many Saints, who have led all their Lives in perfect Chastity; and she is so far from envying their Virginitie, as she highly honours their Memory; yet must they give her leave to take another course, for fear she should do worse: Their Actions must not be her Example.

**Let hem with bꝛede of pure whete be  
fedde**

**And let us wīues eat barly bꝛedde.**

Virgins are to be fed with Purest Man-  
chet,

chet, because their Degree is highest; Wives with Barly Bread, because their condition is lower; yet so she may enjoy here what she most like, she cares not much though her reward be less when the later Harvest comes.

— With barly bred, Marke tell can  
Our lord Jesu refreshed many a man.

All must not eat pure Manchet; nor all attain a Virgin-state: This is her Resolution.

In such a state as God hath cleped us  
I woll persever, I nam not precious  
In wifehode woll I use myn instrument  
As frely as my maker hath it sent.

She constantly holds to her old Tenet: She was not made for a Maid. What she hath receiv'd, must be as freely us'd. She expects both her Morn and Even Benevolence: She hopes to bestead her self of such a man, as will out of his Honesty or civil Curtsie, pay his Debt. Neither will she for her part be altogether unthankful, as he wipes off the old Score, he may begin a new.

An



An husband woll I have I woll not let  
Which shall be both my dettour and my  
thral

And have his tribulacion with all  
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wife  
I haue the power during all my life  
Upon his proper body, and nat he,  
Right thus the apostle tolde to me  
And bad our husbonds for to loue us well  
All this sentence me liketh every dell.

She means to fit her self of an Husband  
both for Ability and Conformity to please  
her mind. He must give her due benevo-  
lence and become enthralled to her service.  
She expects homage and fealty from him,  
which she means to requite with some tribu-  
lation upon his Flesh. She will confirm her  
Affection with fresh remembrances of Cor-  
rection: Whosoever wears the Doublet,  
she means to wear the Breeches. This bra-  
ving humor of hers was to Life described  
by our modern Poet :

*Great's her Ambition, though her Size be  
small;  
Give but a Wench her will, and she has all.*

Sove-

Soveraignty she will have, and such a domineering power over his captive body, as the Mare must prove the better Horse. This she makes good not only by her own private Opinion, nor any Fabulous Tradition, but (to her own Gloss) Apostolical Doctrine: Thus picks she out the Kernel, take the Shell who list. So as methinks she very nearly resembles her humor, who, like a sprightly Bride, hearing those words of Matrimony, to **Serve, Obey, Love and Honour**, so hardly digested them, as she willed the Minister to go no farther, till she had considered better of the matter: Whence the Poet, in the person of this mettall'd Girle;

*Two last I like; to do the firster two  
I shall not have the Patience I vow.*

Whilst this jolly Wife of *Bath* thus descants on her own Command, intending, as you have heard, to make her next Husband her Slave;

Up start the Pardoner, and that anon  
 Now dame qd he, by God and by seint  
 John

Ye ben a noble prechour in this caas  
 I was about to wedde a wife, alas  
 What, should I bye it on my flesh so  
 dere:

Yet had I leber wed no wife to yere.

This commanding Dame startles her Hearers ; and will cause this poor Pardoner answer his Minister, as sometimes a young man answer'd upon like occasion : Who, being to stand as Godfather for a Child, and to answer for it at the Fount, was asked, *Dost thou forsake the Devil and all his Works, &c.* (as is in the words of Baptism) answered in behalf of the Child, *I forsake them all.* The very same day, this young man was to be married, and being by the Minister demanded, *Dost thou take this Woman to thy married Wife ? &c.* Imagining belike, that he was then answering in the person of the Child, to forsake the Devil and all his works, presently replied, *I forsake them all.* While the Pardoner, poor man, stands thus perplexed, fearing he need take up no other

other Cross, than his Wife, if his Fortune  
be to cope with such a Whipster as this *Vi-  
rago*.

**Abide qd she, my tale is not begon  
Nay, thou shalt drinke of another ton &c.**

The Pardoner had thought the worst  
was past; but she had another Brewing for  
him, worse than the first; and this must  
have a stronger tast of the bitter Hop of  
Tribulation. Her own Experience, as she  
confesseth, had sufficiently furnished her  
for matter of Discourse upon the troubles  
and afflictions which accompany Marriage;  
nevertheless, for so much as most part of  
men are more induced by Examples than  
Reasons, she means to enlarge her self in  
that kind.

**For I shall tell ensamples mo than ten  
Who so wol not beware by other men  
By him shall other men corrected be  
These same wordes writeth Ptolome**

An excellent Sentence of Ptolomy in his  
Astrologica<sup>r</sup> observations; He that will not  
be warned by others, shal be a warning unto  
others. Though others harmes cannot make  
him

him beware, the harm which he incurs  
shall beget in others a more circumspect  
care: his folly shall make others wise, his  
weakness others more wary.

**Dame I wol pray you, if your will were  
Said this Pardoner, as ye began  
Tel forth your tale, spare for no man  
And teche us young men of your practike.**

This Pardoner being a young man, and  
desirous to be instructed in that Honoura-  
ble State, to which in short time, he purpo-  
seth to address himself, craves her Directi-  
on, whereto she inclines.

**Gladly (qd she) if it may you like  
But that I pray to all this company  
If that I speke after my fantasy  
As taketh not a grese——**

She easily gives way to his request, pro-  
vided, that none of all her company take  
distast at ought she shall say; being now  
to speak freely, and after her own Phanta-  
sie, purposely to pass time away: After  
which Introduction, she proceeds to this  
her pleasant Relation.

**Now**



Now list, than shall I tell forth my tale  
 As ever mote I drinke wine or ale  
 I shal say soth. Tho husbonds that I  
 had  
 Thre of hem were good, and two were  
 bad.

She repeats afresh the number of her  
 Husbands, with their Dispositions, yea, and  
 Constitutions too, as appears after :

The thre good men were riche and olde  
 Wetheres might they the statute helde  
 In which they were bounden unto me  
 Ye wot well what I meane of this  
 parde.

As if she should say, they were rich in  
 Possessions, but of cold Constitutions. Na-  
 ture was decay'd in them ; they could not  
 perform the Dues of Marriage. Their sleeps  
 were too long, and their Benevolence too  
 short ; This was her meaning, she needs no  
 clearer Exposition.

As God me helpe, I laugh tohan I  
 thinke  
 How pitously a night I made hem to  
 swinke  
 But by my fay, I tolde of it no store  
 They had me yeve her londe and her trea-  
 soze &c.

They wanted not their Curtain-Lectures ;  
 being far better taught than fed. Time  
 was indeed, when she humored their old  
 Chops, and used all diligence to win their  
 Love ; not a good Morfel, but they had  
 their part ; but this was before they parted  
 Stakes. The world is alter'd from what it  
 was : They have now infeoffed her in the  
 whole. All their Lands and Hereditaments,  
 Estates Real and Personal, were past to her  
 and hers for ever ; insomuch, as should  
 they have arrived to the Happines to have  
 surviv'd her, they could hardly recover  
 their Thirds. Now she holds it lost la-  
 bour to strive to please, where no Profit  
 can arise.

What

What, should I take kepe hem for to  
please :

But if it were for my profite and myn  
ease

I set hem so a worke by my faie  
That many a night they songen wel  
awaie.

They never laugh't till their hearts ak'd  
before they were married. She sets them  
their Task, and every night they were to  
render an Account. Before this their un-  
happy Marriage, they might sing *Care away* ;  
Now must they change the Burden of their  
Song to *Well away* ; for well it cannot be  
with them before their dying-day.

The bacon was not fet for hem I trowe  
That some men haue in Essex at Don-  
mowe.

The old Proverb was this :

*He that is not with Penitence taken.*

*For that he married not before, or married  
now,*

*May challenge a Flitch of Essex Bacon,  
And carve his Morfel in the Cow of Donmow.*

But these poor Snakes of hers were far  
from

from challenging any property in either. For their Marriage had brought out no good effect in them, but only Repentance. Rough were her Salutes, Bare her Commons, cold her Comforts. So far were they from Command, as their Lives were a continued slavery.

**I governed him so well after my lawe  
That eche of them full blisful was and  
fawe  
To bring me gay things fro the fayre  
They were full fain whan I spake hem  
faire.**

Fair words make Fools fain. It is true  
what the Poet sometimes sung :

*With Price or Prayer the hardest heart is won,  
Which Age must do, when nought else can be  
done.*

These aged and decrepit Husbands of  
hers, must supply their want of due bene-  
volence with bounty and benificence. One  
comfortable smile, or amorous look, are the  
readiest Keys to unlock these old mens  
Chests. To the Fayr they go, or rather creep;  
but of necessity they must go whom the De-

G

vil

drives. Where their only business is to curry Favour with a commanding Dame, by purchase of a Fayring. Other means they want to purchase their Peace; they purpose therefore to buy it at any Price. Content is worth a Crown; and it must cost them a Crown, but they will procure one minute of Content: And that's the longest Lease they can possibly expect.

**Ye wise wives that can understonde  
Thus shuld ye speke, and bere hem on  
honde  
For halfe so boldly there can no man  
Swere and lye, as a woman can.**

An excellent Commendation for her own Sex! And confirmed by a Tragick Poetess of our own, in these words:

*Women are least of Goods, the worst of Evils,  
Their best are worse than men, their worst than  
Devils.*

Truth is, they may make bold with themselves; albeit, no modest nor gentle Spirit, (unless they sweat in *Swetnam's Surquedry*) can find in their heart to throw such Aspersions on them. But omitting this, you shall  
here



here perceive that this wife of *Bath*, out of her grounded Experience, like a judicious Schole-Mistress to all young married wives, begins her Lecture ; where she informs them how to demean themselves in their several places. Free and friendly is her Advice, accept it who list ; thus she proceeds.

**A wise wife shall if that she can her  
goode**

**Bere him in hende the cowe is woode  
And take wunneste of her owne mayde  
Of her assent :**

A twofold Exposition may be drawn from these Lines. First, If the good-wife desire to put Money in her Purse, she will pretend, for want of Grain, or some other vendible Commodity, that her Cow is run mad, and that she hath sold her to the Butcher for little or nothing, purposely to prevent danger ; mean time she converts the benefit of this pretended Bargain to her self, and so cheats her Husband. Or else thus ; She hath appointed a meeting with a private Friend, to whom she can well spare a Morsel, when her Husband sees not ; And the place of this meeting is the Byer, or

where her Kine lie ; where to prevent her Husband's Repair, and free their amorous Embraces from all suspicious Fear, she feigns her Cow to be wood, which she makes good by her Maid's Assent, who is ready to justify her Dames Speech : She wills him therefore to be wary that he come not there, lest he receive some hurt. Which Fetch is not much unlike that of hers, who desirous to do a Courtesse to a Friend, but out of all hope to get opportunity for effecting what she did so much desire ; at last she remembred, how there was nothing in the world more terrible to her Husband, than a Bear ; by which means she fitted her self of what she most lov'd, by affrighting him with what he most fear'd. This trick therefore she plays him, with consent of her Sweet-heart, whom she preferr'd before him. She contracts with her Friend to cover his Servant in a Bear's Skin, and tie him near to that private place where they had appointed, and which the poor Wittal himself no less suspected. Up he mounts, but as quickly descends ; for the terrible sight of this counterfeit Bear drove from his memory the conceit of all other Fear, which the Epigrammatist

grammatist no less pleasantly weaves up, in  
this manner.

*A wily Wench there was (as I have read)  
Who us'd to **Capricorn** her Husband's head;  
Which he suspecting, lay in private wait,  
To catch the Knave, and keep his Wife more  
strait*

*But all in vain; they day by day did mate it,  
Tet could his four Eyes never take them at it.  
This subtil Wench perceiving how they should  
At last prevented be, do all they could:*

*For now **Italian**-like, her Husband grew  
Horn-mad, I wis, and kept her in a Mew;  
Invent'd a Trick, which to accomplish better,  
Unto her Friend she closely sent a Letter,  
And thus it was; Friend, you shall know  
by me*

*My Husband keeps me far more narrowly  
Than he was wont; so as to tell you true,  
You cannot come to me, nor I to you.  
Tet spite of his Eyes, and as many more,  
Wee'l use those Pleasures which we us'd before:  
Only be wise, and second what I wish;  
Which to express (my Friend) know this it is;  
My Husband, as he hates the **Horn** to wear,  
Of all the Badges forth, so fears he th' **Beare**,*

More than all other Beasts which do frequent  
 The Heathy **Forest's** spacious Continent.  
 If thou wilt right me then, and pepper him,  
 Cover thy Servant in a false Bear's Skin :  
 And come to morrow as thou us'd before,  
 Tying thy Servant to my Chamber door.  
 After this quaint Direction he attir'd  
 His man in Bear-skin, as she had desir'd :  
 Ent'ring the Chamber, he received is  
 With many a Smile, Back-fal, and sweetned  
 Kifs.

For they're secure of all that was before,  
 Having a **Bear**, that kept the **Bulle** from  
 Dore.

The Wittal Fool no sooner Inckling had,  
 Then up the Stairs he ran as he were mad :  
 But seeing none but th' **Bear** to entertain him,  
 Of Horns he never after did complain him.

I have here fet down this Conceit to the  
 full, because it hath such near resemblance  
 to this part of Chaucer's Tale : Wherein  
 we proceed.

— But herkneeth how I sayde.  
 Sir old Reynarde, is this thy aray  
 Why is mine neighbours wife so gay ?

The

The first instruction she gave young Wives, was how to Gull their Husbands, and how they were to cram their Purfes with nimble cheats, or enjoy an amorous choice. Now like a domineering Housewife, she tells them, how they must twit their Husbands, if their Neighbours Wives goe trimmer or neater than they. As if she should say, What Sir *Raynard*, ye fox-skin'd Chuffe, must I come behind such a Gossip for fashion? Must I Snayl-like, keep still under roof, while thou goes a Ranging to thy Neighbour's house, and neighs after thy Neighbour's Wife? You Sir, may whisper a wanton Tale in the ear of such a Maid, and you must not be reprov'd? Nay Sir *Lecher*, you must be in all your amorous actions approved? Mean time, if I have a Gossip or a Friend, without conceit of ill, I must be chid, while you, Sir, come reeling home, upbraiding me, that I play wanton in such an house, or dishonour you in such a place. Every Ale-bench must be the Stage where you act my disgrace; where sometimes, you revile me, for my poverty; or else disparage me for my Parentage; or if my descent be above yours, you tax me



of pride, and tell me, high blood ever sparkles for good Cloathes. Sometimes my mirth mads you, otherwhiles my melancholy distracts you. If I be fair, my fort is half wonne, my chastity cannot hold out long; every opportunity tempts me, every light Assailant taints me. Some, you say, chuse us for Portion, others for Proportion; some for Beauty and outward Feature, others for Breeding and Behaviour; some for Affability, others for Agility; some for pure and dainty hands, others for small enazur'd Arms; All which, you say, are Lures to Lust, and keep the High-Road to the Devil's Court. Again, if I be foul, why then I turn common Haxter; I will never want for Trading: As fair Forts are won by long Siege; so we that are foul, will rather lay siege unto others, than not be won. Spaniels are not more fawning, than we are fancying. He were a mean Personage we could not affect, and this were our comfort, "She is a black Crab that can find no Mate: Though our choice be not so worthy, we shall find one Gander-goose or other to fit our Fancy.

Thus

Thus saist thou lozel, whan thou goest  
to bed

That no wise man nedeth soz to wed.

A strange kind of Even-song ; when the day is spent in ranging , and the Evening in railing. Doest thou think , *Lorel* , that to go to heaven by a Wife, is to go by Bow and not by String ? Well Sir, I hope to see you go by the String , and then your way will be readier. You say, a dropping, smoaky house and a chiding wife will cause a man fly out of his house. What will a dropping Nose do, you Ice-Ickle you ? You say, Wives have the Trick to dissemble and shroud their Vices, yea, and colour them too with fair Pretences, as if they were special Vertues ; But Wood that shines most, is most commonly least sound : We can find time to fit you with a Peny-worth, and make your Ears look through your Night-cap, after the new Fashion : And what of all this ? We leave ( I hope ) sufficient for your queasie Stomachs, when all this is done. Again, like a Proverbial old Dottrel, you say, that not only for Oxen, Asses, Horses, and Hounds , but even Basons , Lavers ,  
Spoons,

Spoons, Stools, Pots, & other Vessels, men use to try them, before they buy them; whereas, Wives must not be tryed, till they cannot deny it; being to be wedded before they be Bedded. Heyday! is your Spirit so Coltish? It seems, if your Judgment might pass, or stand for a Decree, you would try before you married, and so take occasion to repent before you needed. Neither will these untowardly humors content you, but they must yet run on worser Extreame. Your Doltship will not stick to say, how nothing displeaseth me more, than not to hear my Beauty praised, my less than ordinary parts admired; Nay, I am discontent forsooth, when you look not Babies in mine Eyes, and fame my Beauty in every place; Again, if you make not a solemn Feast on my Birthday, with preparation of Luscious Fare for your Guests, of Sumptuous Attire for my self, a free and friendly Welcom to all, especially to my Nurse, whom you must that day highly honour, and the Crisp-hair'd Wag that attends me in my Chamber, with all my Fathers Folk and his Allies, you are out of my Books for ever.

Thus

Thus saist thou old barel full of lies.  
 And yet of our prentise Jenkin  
 For his crisp hert, shining as gold fine  
 And for he squireth me both up and  
 Downe

Hast thou caught a false suspectioun  
 I woll him nat. —

Thus Sir, you use the Liberty of your lavish Tongue; yea, my poor prentice *Jenkin* cannot be free from your Jealousie and Suspition. If I at any time use him for the Squire of my Body, or to Usher me in the streets: Your yellow humour interprets this to be too much familiarity, and that *Jenkin* must become Father of your Progeny. No Sir, you shall know that I am not brought to that low fall, but if you should dye to morrow, I could make choice of a statelier Minion than *Jenkin*. But to let this pass, how is it, you old musty Dotard, that with a sorrow you hide the keys of your Chests from me; have I not a property in your goods aswell as you? Do you mean to make an Ideot of me?

Thou

**Thou shalt nat both though thou were  
wood  
Be maister of my body and of my good**

How is it Sir, that you sometimes promised with your body to honour me, and with all your worldly goods to endow me, and that now with the first you dishonour me, and for the later (like a Devil in the Vault) you lock them from me? I think Sir, if it were in your power, you would lock me up in your Chest too, but that's above your cupping. Had you but so much wit in your Sage Sconce, you would rather in this sort demean your self towards me, "Good wife, go where you list; disport your self where you please, mine ear is open to no Tales; my knowledge hath given me that approvement of you, as I cannot suspect you. For I must tell you, we women cannot endure that any one should question us where we live, or whom we love; where we gad, or when we Gossip. Of all men blest be that saying of the wise Astrologer *Ptolomy*, who drew this conclusion from the Depth of his Philosophy.



**Of all men his wisdom is the best  
That reckoneth not who hath the world in  
hond.**

His condition is the happiest, who for Affairs of this world is indifferentest. This Sentence here this Goodwife useth, purposely to withdraw her Husband from intermeddling in his own Estate, and absolutely to invest her self in it. As if she should say, You Sir, that have the one Foot in the Grave already, how is it that you incumber your mind so much with things transitory? you have enough for your time; shake hands with the world, seeing the world hath now shaken hands with you. Leave the care of these Businesse: to me. Neither, do I only speak this in behalf of your temporal Estate, but in delights of your Bed. What if another take a Shive of your cut Loaf; must this trouble you? Doubt not, Good man, but you shall have enough left to serve your turn. He is too too envious, that cannot endure another should light his Candle at his Lanthorn. This neither lessens your Light, nor the other weakens your delight.

**Thou**

**Thou saiest also, that if we make us gay  
With clothes, or with precious array  
That it is peril of our chastite &c,**

Besides, all this, you say Sir, if we go gay, we must needs be gamefom. We cannot be neat, but we do it to get a new Mate: And this you strengthen with an Apostolical Exhortation, "*Array your selves in comely Apparel, with Shamefastness and Modesty; not with broided hair, or Gold, or Pearls, or costly Apparel; but as becometh women that profess the fear of God.*" It seems, you are an excellent Text-man for your own purpose. But I must not grow out of Love with myself, for your Censure. I mean not to be taught by your Text; nor to make your Rubrick my Rule.

**I will not worch as mock, as a Onatte  
Thou saiest also, I was; like a Catte.**

Comly Comparisons! You say a sleek-skinn'd Cat will ever go a Caterwawing; she cannot abide keeping at home. No more will I (for so you apply it) I must needs be shewing my gay Cloaths, there is no remedy; for Pride cannot endure to attend a Family.

**Sir**

**Sit old foole, what helpeth thee to spie  
For though thou play Argus with his  
hundred iyen &c.**

Never play the Fool thus, to think that  
your Jealousie can prevent Opportunity.

*No Jealousie can ever that prevent,  
Where as two parties once be full content.*

For had you as many eyes as *Aristor's*  
Son, the hundred-eyed *Argus*, I should  
find one Trick or other to gull you, and di-  
stinguish your Coat by an invisible Crest.

**Thou saiest eke, that ben things three  
The which troubleth all this yearth.**

Wine is furious, an Eave-dropper dan-  
gerous; but a Woman, you say, of all  
others most malicious. Yea, you have other  
Proverbial Resemblances; which, at first  
sight, are like your wise Parables; where-  
in you compare a Woman's Love to Hell,  
ever raging; to barren Land, no good  
bearing, without water, thirsty and seer-  
ing; to Wild-Fire, ever burning, and de-  
siring to consume whatsoever is combusti-  
ble, or apt for kindling: You say likewise,  
as

as Trees are decayed by Worms, so are Husbands by their Wives. But truth is, if we trouble you at Board, such feeble Lorrels as you, trouble us as little in Bed.

**Lordings, right thus as ye haue understood**

**Bare I stilly mine old husband on hond.**

Oft-times would I twit them with these and such like Speechs, which (as I pretended) were usually bolted forth by them, when they were drunk; and two WITNESSES had I in readines to justifie their Abuse, my jolly *Jenkin*, and my Neece. Oh how I could set my Countenance to frown and lowr, and sell store of Powts for nothing! I was never in my right home, but when I was out of Tune; I could whine, and plain, when I felt but little Pain. Mean time, he that came first to Mill, had his Corn first ground. I made no Bones of chusing a dainty Morfel for my own Tooth: Yet all this while, I lay all the blame on them: They were in the fault, though I reapt the Fruit.

**Of wenches would I bere bent on bond  
When that for sick, unnethes might they  
stand.**

I charg'd them with Wenching, when God knows, they stood in greater need of a Cawdle. Yet it delighted these old Chrones to be so thought of: They desir'd rather to be tax'd of Luxury, than Disability. And to to sharpen their Appetite, I told them, that so jealous a conceit I had of them, as my walking forth a nights was for no other end, than to take them napping with their dainty Doxies. Under which colour and pretence, I took my Range, and freely conformed with those I lov'd best. I had a Friend in a Corner to cool my Choler, and cure my Distemper. Reer Suppers were my Solace: I suited my youthful Fancy to jovial Company: And Company causeth somewhat.

**Disceit, weeping, spinning, God hath gibe  
To women, kindly while that they live.**

To have Deceit in our Waies, Tears in our Eyes, and the Spindle in our hands, is an Instinct given us by Nature. By which

H

subtil



subtil means, I ever had the better of them, and gave them the Foyle at their own Weapon. Continually was I murmuring and repining, I was a Chafing Dish at their Board, and Wormwood in their Bed. I caus'd them bite oth' Bridle, while I was ever chawing some good Bit.

**I would no lenger in the bed abide  
 (If I felt his arme ouer my side)  
 Till he had made his ransome unto me  
 Than would I suffer him to do his  
 nicete.**

I must tell you, I was a coy Dame, and stood on my Pantofles. I could not brook that his dry and feer Arms should embrace my Wast. Had his Body indeed been as strong as his Breath, I could have lik'd him better; but the weakness of the one gave an Earthy strength to the other. Turn to him I would not under a couple of Capons; He must purchase my Love, or farewell Frost.

**And therefore euery man this tale I tell  
 True whoso may, all bene for to sel  
 With empty honds ———**

I am nothing nice in the Discovery of my own Device ; make use of it who will. Here is the Fair, buy who list : they may furnish themselves for nothing. Sometimes I would not stick to put on a smooth Brow ; and feign a kind of Fondling, with a strong desire of seeming to accept what was privately tendered by him:

**And make me than a fained appetite  
And yet in Bacon had I neuer delite.**

Yet all this was but a seeming Appetite ; Such course Meat was not for my dainty Stomach. All this , and more did I for mine own ends , Which I had no sooner obtained, than I put on mine old Countenance. Little Quiet could he have either in his Repast, or Repose , at Bed , or at Board. Yea, so strong was my Spleen, so violent my Hate, as had the Pope's Holiness been present, I am persuaded I should have shewn small Reverence to his Pontifical Presence. Out might my Passion have issued, and shewn her Impatience. Neither do I remember that he ever gave me one word, but I gave him two for't. Yea, should I now make my last Will and Testament, and dis-

cover to the world all our Bickerings, and unfavoury Parlies; I would take my Book-Oath that I am nought behind with him, but have fitted him to the full. And this was the direct way to purchase my Peace, otherwise had we been at Debate for ever.

**For though he looked as woode as a lion  
Yet should he faile of his conclusion &c.**

Thus could I vye in colours to delude his Nature, and fit my Disposition to oppose his Humor. If he playd the Lamb, I could play the Lion; if he the Lion, I the Lamb.

**Then would I say, good lefe take kepe  
How mekely lokeeth wilkin our shepe  
Cum nere my spouse, ———**

What a Racket my pretty Pigsnie keeps? Let me kiss thy tother Cheek, my lovely Honey-suckle. Can you that have preach'd so long of *Job's* Patience, retain so long in your heart any Malice? Ye men, as you are stronger by nature, so should you be discreeter, and of stayeder temper. What man, are you jealous of me that you do not only enjoy me? What, would you have  
my

my best Commodity to your self? Why, take it to you, and much good may it do you. I know you for a notable Soaker; you cannot endure a Sharer: Well, go to; you shall have it to you, and your sole use for ever. For know, my best Spouse, if I would set my Jewel at sale; I could go in more gaie and fresh Arraie than I do now: but the honest Continence of my Desire makes me walk in homelie Attire. Good sooth, you are much to be blam'd; I have no Toy, but for your Tooth. My own Breast knows best whether I love any other; For if I did, your quick Eie would soon discover it.

**Such maner words had we on hand  
Now will I speake of my fourth husband.**

Thus far has our Wife of *Bath* discours'd of the Natures, Humors, and Features of her three first Husbands: Wherein she hath exprest to life how harshlie Youth and Age are suited; with especial Directions how the Distastes of a loathed Bed may be allaied; how Youthful Delights may be

wisely carried; and the waiwardness of Age better tempered.

**My fourth husband was a rebelour  
This is to say, he had a paramour.**

She is now fitted in her kind; what she feigned to be in her three Husbands before, she finds really lov'd by her fourth: Neither will she abate him a hair, and she gives the Reason.

**I was yong and full of ragerie  
Stubborn and strong, and joly as a Pie.**

She was but in the Flower of her Youth; albeit, she had dispatch'd three Husbands; full of Metal and Agilitie; of a stubborn and strong Will; for it had never been deni'd her; of a pliant and nimble Body; and this had such found who had tri'd her: One as right as my Leg, and seemingly, of that wanton Wenches humor, who could not endure to have this word, *Notwithstanding*, mentioned in her Jointure, but lik'd well of this Clause, *Provided alwaies*; which if he were not, another should. That her Education or Breeding was good, may appear by those singular



lar Qualities which she privately both professed and practised. She could dance neatly, and sing to the Harp sweetly, if she had but liberally tasted of the sweet Grape: Which, it appears, she dearly loved, by her free Reproof towards one, by whom his Wife was not only from drinking Wine restrained, but being taken at it, was of Life deprived.

**Metellus, the foule churle the swine  
That with a staffe beraft his wife her  
life**

**For the dronke wine: though I had be  
his wife &c.**

This is meant of that temperate *Roman*, *Metellus*, who, albeit he fell into this violent Extream, upon the finding of his wife distempered with Wine (which Vice, by the Testimonie both of *Plutarch* and *Macrobins*, was held among the *Romans* to be more punishable in Women, than Adulterie) was highly renowned for a Noble and Victorious Souldier, having highly improved his Fame to his Countries succeeding Honour. But had this Good-wife of *Bath* been *Metellus* his Wife, she vows she would

have plid the Pitcher in splte of all his Valour: and had a little touch of *Venus* Game too, after her Blood were inflam'd with the Spirit of Liquor.

**For also seker, as cold engendreth haile  
A licorous mouth must have a lecherous  
taile.**

This her own Experience had taught her, which she patcheth up with a shread of her Philosophy, to strengthen it the better. Wine, indeed, affords Fewel for Lust. The understanding part being darkned and drowned, the Sensitive part becomes domineering, by subjecting Reason to blind Affection. She finds poor Defence for her Honour, who deprives her self of that which should be her best Armour.

**But lord Christ, when it remem-  
breth me  
Upon my youth, and my jolite  
It tickleth me about the hart roote  
Unto this daie it doth my hart boote &c.**

It delights her to remember the Pranks of her Youth; and no doubt, it would highly content her to have a Taft of *Ason's* Herb,

Herb, and so become young again : For  
her Desires continue strong, though her  
Strength be weak ; her Thoughts green,  
though her Hairs be gray.

**But age alas, that all woe envenime  
Hath me becraft my beaute, and my pith  
Let go farewel, the Devil go therewith.**

A charitable old Trader ! Age like a  
Venom, hath crept upon her, the Beauty and  
Strength of her Youth have left her ; Both  
which, seeing she cannot recover, she free-  
ly bequeaths the Devil that which she can-  
not keep with her. Yet holds she on in  
her old Trade of Folly.

**The floure is gone, there nis no more to  
tell**

**The bran (as I best can) now mote I  
sell.**

Few or none but they will leave Sin, when  
Sin hath left them ; but this merry Gossip  
will scarcely leave it, when she is now left  
by it. Though the Flower of her Youth be  
lost, the Bran of her age is left, and that  
must now be bolted , or she will never rest  
contented.

**But**

**But yet to be right merry woll I fonde  
Now forth to tell of my fourth husbonde.**

All this which hath been said last, must serve for a Preamble to her fourth Husband; of whom her Discourse must be but short, according (as may be supposed) to the length of his Life, and height of her Love.

**I saie I had in hart great despite  
That he of any other had Delite.**

He was of a wanton Life himself, and therefore looks for his Wife in the Oven, where himself had been. Ill Doers are ever ill Deemers. None are more suspicious than such as are most vicious. A Licentious man's Eye is in every Corner; to whom the very least Occasion will minister apparent ground of Suspition.

**But he was quit, by God and saint Iose  
I made him of the same wood a troce &c.**

Truth was, he could not for his heart be more jealous of me, than I was of him. Neither indeed, had he any just cause to suspect me of Wantonness. Here she excuseth herself that she never consorted with any good  
Fellows.

Fellows for her own bodily pleasure, in all this Husband's time. Only she invited them to good Chear; being now turn'd professed Gossipper: And all this, perchance, (so perverse was her Disposition) rather to nettle and sting her Husband, than any singular Delight she took, either in respect of her Comrades, or Delicacy of Tooth: as may be probably gathered by those Verses immediately following.

— **I made folke such chere  
That in his owne grece I made him frie  
foz anger, and foz very jelousie.**

Out of a Jealousie, or rather a constant perswasion, that she was as liberal of her Flesh, as of her Fare, he fried himself in his own Grease: he wasted himself with anger: seeing both a weakning of his Fortune, and impeaching of his Honour (as he verily suspected) cope so closely one with another.

**By God, in yearth I was his purgatorie  
foz which I hope his soul be in glory.**

It seems she was good for something, if it were but to become her Husband's Purgatory;



gatory; more properly the Touchstone of his Patience. By this means she thinks he had his Purgatory on Earth, and consequently, without any Rub or Stay in his way, he may go directly to Heaven. Afflictions being Exercises, he needed not suffer his Body to rust for want of them, having both at Bed and at Board such plenty of them.

**For God it wote, he sate ful oft and long  
Whan that his shoe full bitterly him  
wong.**

Like a down-right honest man, he set the best Face he could on't. Yet when he feigned most Mirth, he had greatest cause to mourn. Every man knew not where his shoe wrinch'd him. He might laugh till his heart ak'd again, yet never a whit nearer relief: She had vow'd to be his Executioner, purposely to become his Executor.

**He died whan I came fro Hierusalem  
And lieth in grave under the Rode beem.**

This good wife, belike, had taken her Pilgrimage to *Jerusalem*, either voluntarily  
or,

or by Injunction. No doubt, had she plaid Pilgrim all her time, her Husband had a lighter heart. But now coming home, she finds her Husband drawing near his last home. Whom she sees no sooner departed, than she takes course to prevent his Revival, to have him no less suddenly, than solemnly buried. Under the Rood-loft (a place of especial Reverence in former times) she causeth his Grave to be made; albeit in no sumptuous manner as ancient Heroes have been interred, as she after expressed:

All his his tombe so curious  
As was the sepulture of him *Darius*  
Which that *Apelles* wrought so subtelly  
It is but wast to burie him pretiously.

To bestow on him so Gorgeous or Sumptuous a Sepulchre, as was that which was erected in the honour of *Darius*, formed by the curious Art of famous *Apelles*; or as that of *Artimisia* in the Memory of her *Man-solus*, were but (as she thinks) lost labour: So much cost would make a poor Executor, and too much impoverish the Survivor.

Let

Let him farewell, god give his soul good  
rest.

He is now in his grave and in his  
chest.

He is now laid in Earth, and his Soul ; I  
hope, at rest : He had my leave to be gone  
before he went. To grieve for that which  
cannot be remedied is bootless. I will spare  
then to shed any Tears, seeing they are no  
less Foolish than fruitless. And so Good  
night to my fourth Husband.

Now of my fifth husband will I tell  
God let never his soule come in hell.

She had no sooner left her fourth Hus-  
band in his Grave, than she makes ready to  
go to Church for a Fifth. And of such an  
one she speeds her self, that it seems his Soul  
deserv'd well of her, whatsoever his Body  
did. Yet is it to be wondred at, how she  
should be so charitable in her blessings to-  
wards him, who was so shrewd in his blows,  
towards her. But of this she gives a rea-  
son : Truth is, he was shrewd to me, and  
gave me store of rib roast, imagining be-  
like that I was of the nature of the Walnut  
Tree,

Tree, that must be cudgelled before it be fruitful; yet for all this, I cannot but remember him with a great deal of love. Though he gave me correction, he had an other winning way to gain my affection. He was of an able and active body, and could till me on with such pretty Toies and Tales when he desired to have that which I no less desired my self, and he could win me with a smile, and with a smooth brow allay my storm.

**I trow I lov'd him the better, for that he  
Was of his love so dangerous to me.**

A strong Womans reason.

*Follow women, they will fly you,*

*Fly but Women, they'll draw nigh you.*

*If you would a Woman move,*

*Seem to love not, when you love.*

The way then to win them, is seemingly to wean our affection from them. Proffer'd ware, be it never so precious, is disvalued; That only is held worth our purchase, which is with niceness gained: whatsoever is forbid us, is with eager appetite pursued by us. To utter our Ware with danger, will  
improve

improve our commodity most to our advantage and honour.

**And to great chepe is hold at to little price  
This knoweth every woman that is wise**

Far fetch'd and dear bought is good for Ladies. A vile price makes the commodity no less vile. Highly then was this Husband affected, because he was dainty and nice in his affection. He caus'd her now and then to bite oth' bridle, and to fast, that her Stomach might become stronger for the next Feast. She had now and then a bit and a buffet with't. All her dayes were not Holy-dayes; this made her pleasure (because rare) more welcom, when it came.

**My fifth husbonde, God his soule blesse  
Which I took for love and no richesse  
He sometime was a Clerk in Drenforde  
And had left schole, & went at home to boz'd  
With my gossip, dwelling in our town  
God have her soul, her name was Alisoun**

Here she expresseth his state, condition, and profession; his state or condition, it may seem, was but mean, but his person promising; pure love and no other worldly respect



respect made her chuse him. He was a Scholar, and unprefer'd, and consequently not like to be rich. But now had he left Schole, with his hopes of some poor Fellowship, which were but small, in regard of his weak Parts, or that he had no Letters commendatory, from some great or powerful Favorite, to procure it; And now in stead of a Fellowship, he intends to board himself privately with Dame *Alyson*, this Good-wifes Gossip. Now whether this were the self-same *Alyson*, the Carpenter's Wife, mentioned in our *Miller's Tale*, I will not here dispute; Only, with submission alwaies to deeper Judgments, I conceive, that by all probability it should be the very same *Alyson*, but that this Clerk of *Oxford* here mentioned, was *Nicholas* the Astronomer, who fancied Dame *Alison*, I cannot assent; for this bears another name. Be she what she will be, it appears she was a kind-hearted Gossip, and of inward Acquaintance with our Wife of *Bath*: Being ever constantly of her Bosom-counsel, together with another Wife, whom she names not, and her Neece, in all which, she reposed great Confidence. No Secret could there  
be,

be, which might either concern her Husband or her self, but it was imparted to one of these three. No counsel so private, no passage so secret, which was not to these communicate.

**And so I did it often God it wote  
That made his face full ofte redde and  
hote.**

This Wife of *Bath* was too full of Chinks to be a good Secretary. Her Husband could tell her nothing over night, but next day she would be Carrier of it abroad: wherein our Poet privately glanceth at such as too freely use to commit their nearest thoughts to the secrecy of a Woman: whereof though some be Seals, others be Sieves.

**And so befil, that ones in a Lent  
So oft time I to my Gossip went &c**

Now she comes to relate the season and occasion of her first Familiar Acquaintance with this Clark of *Oxford*, her jolly *Jenkin*: This begun in Lent, but she means to make it no time of Abstinence. She and her kind Gossip must take Air, and in such Moneths as afford most delight. Yet cannot those  
fresh

fresh and fragrant Fields sufficiently refresh them, unless they have *Jenkin* the Scholar for an Usher to conduct them. And a good Opportunity had this Good wife, for her Husband was at *London*: With liberty therefore might she take her range to Vigils, Visitations, Preachings, Pilgrimages and Processions; to Stage-plays, Puppet-plays and Marriages; where she might see and be seen; yea felt, heard and understood. Her gay Scarlet Petticoat, and Broad-cloath Gown need now fear no Moaths; they are too daily worn to be eaten with Worms. Her Cloaths make every day their Holiday. Till her Husband come home, she means not to make her own house her home. The Field must be her Walk, and *Jenkin* her Mate.

**Now will I tell forth what happed me  
I saie, that in the fieldes walked we.**

Now begun she to grow more familiar with this dainty Clerk. She is now not only for walking, but talking with him; yea, and dalliance too; till in the end, she holds him for her only private Friend, and such an one, as she could find in her heart to

commend to his Trust the greatest Secret  
she has in the world.

**I spake to him, and said how that he  
If I were wedowe, should wedde me.**

This is plain dealing, and deserves the  
Scholar's favourable construction: As if  
she should say, Ye Scholars are dangerous  
Youths; when ye woo least, ye win most;  
when ye speak least, ye prevail most. Did  
ye perceive nothing, Sir *Jenkin*, when of  
all others, I chus'd you to keep me compa-  
ny; walked and talked with you private-  
ly; and made you acquainted with my bo-  
som-Secrecy? Truly, I must tell you, should  
mine Husband die, as all Flesh is mortal, I  
am verily perswaded that I should wish with  
all mine heart to enjoy an Armful of you.  
In good sooth we women are the veriest  
Fools in the world: If we love, we cannot  
lain: whereas you men are mighty Dissem-  
blers, and will bring us weak things into  
Fools Paradise: when you seem to love us,  
you will soonest leave us. Well, durst I  
trust you, I could tell you somewhat would  
make your Ear tingle: But I will not; and  
yet I think I must; it will needs out. I am  
half

half persuaded you have given me some Love-powder, or I should never fawn nor fond on you after this manner. Know Sir, I made choice of you for your Person, no Preferment nor Possession; for I hear, you have but a poor Scholar's Fortune. Now think not that I stood unprovided before I came to be acquainted with you. No Sir; I must tell you, I need not want for Pleasure, if I took delight in such Chaffer. I ever held her a foolish Mouse that had but one hole to creep out at. I am neither so old nor mishapen, but I should find one or other to accept of the motion.

**I bare him on hand he had enchanted me**

**My Dame taught me forsooth that subtilte.**

A dainty Device! This was Dame *Alyson's* subtilty. And that she might all the better persuade him, that she thinks on him by day, she tels him how she dreams of him by night. Where she relates to him the Circumstances of her terrible Dream: How she verily thought in her sleep that he came and assaulted her, purposing to have slain her:



and how she started, as she lay upright in her Bed, to resist his Fury; which were the least of her thought upon so fair an Opportunity. Yet interprets she all this in the best sense. For that abundance of Blood wherewith she thought her self embath'd, did signifie Gold, which he might be sure to enjoy, if ever her Husband should die, and her self to boot.


**For blood betokeneth gold, as I was taught**

**And all was fals, I dreamed of him right naught.**

All these supposed Dreams were but to delude him, and make him more confident of the Love she bare him. A right careful Observer of whatsoever her subtil Tutor Dame *Alyson* had inform'd her. One who had sufficient Experience to instruct an apt Scholar in Rules of Dalliance.

**And now sir let me se, what Chal I sain  
I ha, by God I haue my tale again.**

An excellent Rhetorical \* Figure here used by our Poet.

\* *Επαιρο* 

It

It seems the remembrance of the proper Personage of her neat Clark, had like to have made her quite forget her Tale. Yet, at last, she recals to mind the Story whereon she is to treat, which Subject, sometimes, she was as apt to forget.

**When that my fourth husbond was on  
here**

**I wept algate, and made soxie chere.**

Or for want rather of natural Tears, she furnish'd her self of other effectual means : She wrapt an Onion in the one Nook of her Handkercher, or pump'd for Tears; or drew her Face into a Purse, purposely to feign a kind of sorrowing, when her Heart was full of Joy, in hope to enjoy her *Jenkin*.

**But for that I was purbeied of a make  
I wept but small, and that I undertake.**

No doubt, but she had prov'd a better Mourner, had she been a worser Purveior: Like to that Widow, whereof I have heard this Story. That, having buried three Husbands, and all those with a very small portion or quantity of Tears, she came at last

to the Grave with her Fourth, for whom she wept bitterly ; which her Neighbors much wondring at, demanded of her the Cause why she should be so immoderate in her Sorrow for that last Husband, who had been of so harsh and rough a Disposition, and so patient at the Deaths of all the other three, who were of loving and affable Natures, and had deserved so well at her hands ? To whom she made this Answer ; That she wept not so much for that she was of her sweet Husband deprived, as that she was now destitute and unprovided ; whereas at the Deaths of her other Husbands, she was ever of another prepared before the other was buried.

To church was my husband boyn on  
 morow  
 With neighbours, that for him made  
 sorow  
 And Jenkin our clerke —

It is to be wondred why she let him lie so long unburied ; but it seems there was some Solemnity to be used, or else that his Friends and Neighbors did expect it. You may imagine now, when she sees her Sweet-heart

heart *Jenkin* amongst other Mourners, that she has made a League with her Eyes, not to shed one Tear; with her Heart, not to send forth one Sigh, unless it be in jest, and so fool the Spectators. Neat were his Legs, pretty were his Feet: These were her Objects in this Spectacle of Sorrow. This serious Survey or Perusal of *Jenkin's* Person had so taken up her Eye, as it could fix it self on no other Object, while he was in Presence. Yea, her Blood began to sparkle now afresh in her, so as in her own conceit she was twenty years younger than she was in the Morning. Though forty Winters had already blown upon her; and consequently some Tokens of Age had stamp'd their Impressures in her: She had alwaies a Colt's Tooth. Yea, she had divers other signs of an Invincible Patient, as she her self after confesseth.

**Cap tothed I was, and that became me  
wele**

**I had the paint of Dame Venus sele  
As helpe me God, I was a lustie one  
And faire, riche, and yong, and well bl-  
gone.**

She

She was gap-tooth'd, or wide-spaced, not like *Pirrhus*, whose Teeth were all one Bone, undivided. Though this might seem some Deformity, it became her well, even as *Venus* Mole made her more lovely: Right Bullion she was, apt for any Impression. Of a lively and lusty Nature; a fresh and lovely Feature; rich in Fortune; young in her own Opinion; and every way (as she thought) deserving Affection. In Sense, she was Venereal; in Heart, Martial; *Venus* gave her the Gift to be lascivious; *Mars* to be couragious; *Taurus* was her Ascendent, *Mars* therein Predominant: But had *Mars* been her Husband, her too common Dalliance might well have chang'd *Taurus* into *Aries*, and enjoyn'd him to hold of her for Term of Life *in Capite*.

**Alas, alas, that ever love was sin.**

She bestows the deserving Name of Love upon hateful Lust; but these are to be remarkably distinguished, because their Natures are wholly different, as the Poet sometimes well exprest them, in his Description of Love.

Love,



Love, what's thy Name? A Phrensie : Whence  
thy Birth?

From Heaven : How comes it then thou liv'st  
on Earth?

I live not there. Yet each usurps thy Name :  
'Tis true indeed, but hence redounds their  
shame.

" I live not there, my Nature's pure and  
" just,

" But Lust lives there, and Love's a Foe to  
" Lust.

This merry Wife of Bath could find in  
her heart, that this Wantonness of hers,  
which she terms Love, were no sin; and  
pity it is, thinks she, that 'tis not so, seeing  
it affords such sweet self-delight to the  
Sense.

I followed aie mine inclination  
By vertue of my constellation  
That made me I couth not withdrawe  
My chamber of Venus from a good  
felawe.

Herein our Poet covertly taxeth such  
who attribute so much unto natural Provi-  
dence,

dence, as though it were inevitable, and thereby use it as a Refuge or Sanctuary, for all their evil Actions. Unto which may be objected the Answer of *Chrysippus*, writing in this manner: Although (saith he) that Nature hath provided all things from the Beginning, and that by her Providence all things are moved and stirred up by a certain necessary Reason and Motion; yet notwithstanding our Dispositions and Minds are no further subject or in danger thereof, than their Propriety and Quality is concordant and agreeable unto the same. For, if by Nature our Wits be first made wholsom and good, apt to receive good Notions, fair Impressions; by being after indued with Reason and Understanding, either they do utterly put off and avoid all evil Influences and accidents, or else by their discreet temper, receive and bear them more easily without hurt or damage. If contrariwise, our dispositions be rude and gross, not endued with any kind of Letters or good Learning, to assist and help them withal, with every light Conflict or Assault of our Natural Inclination, we run headlong into all kind of Errors and Vice. For we  
ought

ought first to know and understand, that neither the Stars, nor any Natural Influences do provoke or force us to any thing, but only make us apt and prone: And being so disposed, do, as it were, allure and draw us forward to our Natural Inclination. This might be illustrated by example of the Cylinder-Stone; which by nature being apt to roll and tumble, and being cast or thrown down into hollow or steep places, doth run without ceasing, not so much because it is cast or thrown, as for his own Nature or Aptness thereunto, and not having any thing in it self to withstand the same.

**Yet have I Hartes marke upon my face**

**And also in another private place.**

It seems our *Venus* had been at her *Lemnian* Forge; she had got some Marks of her Trade, which she meant to carry with her to her Grave. She confesseth, she never loved with Discretion; for in the whole course of her Trade she never made any distinction. Her Appetite was equally eager to all proper promising persons, were they of what Rank or Fashion soever. The black

was

was admitted as well as the white, the poor as the rich : Her Fort gave way to all Affailants.

**What should I say ? but at the moneths end**

**This joly clerk Jenken, that was so hend**

**Hath wedded me with great solempnite  
And to him yave I all the londe and  
fee----**

She had past her mourning Month, and now comes in her hony Month, where *Jenkin* is become owner both of her self and her state. What was given her by Age, she as freely bestows upon Youth. Grants of her Lands, Keys of her Chests, all her goods movable and immovable, personal and real, are at his service, without any evi-  
ction, molestation, or incumbrance soever. But no sooner restrains he her of her Range, then she repents her of her Gift. Gladly would she have him re-convey it to her, but though he be a meer Scholar, he is no such Gooselin. Now the Reason why she repents her of what was conferred by her, was this ; He begun not only to restrain her, but cha-  
stise her. By

By God he smote me ones with his fist  
 For that I rent out of his booke a leafe  
 That of that stroke, my eyes wer dese.

As if she should thus say, Who would have thought that this smooth-chinn'd Primcock, but new-come from Schole, should thus begin to scourge me, who have had the Schooling and Scourging of four antient Benchers? Admit I rent a Leaf out of his Book, when the Story did discontent me, must he presently fall to his Rubber of Cuffs, and so be reveng'd on me? Well, though this quaint Clerk fell aboard so roughly with me; I think I gave him his Pennyworths; Judge you that hear me. Never was Lions more fierce, nor Jay more jangling. Though he labour'd to restrain me, in despite of him I took my Liberty. From house to house went I Gossiping. Neither his Oaths nor Anger could wean me from mine humor.

For which full oft time would he preache  
 And me of old Roman jestes teache.

He ply'd me with Lectures out of old *Roman* Stories for his own purpose: Amongst  
 which,



which, he told me, how one *Sulpitius Gallus* utterly forsook his Wife, for shewing her self but once openly at the Door, and taking a view of Passengers as they went by. Also, how another *Roman* (*Novellus Torquatus*; or I mistake it ) wholly relinquish'd his Wife, for making resort to a Summer Game without his Knowledg. And how *Plutarch* (whose Authority might more properly be alledged in this Argument) affirmeth that it is a Custom in *Egypt*, that Women should wear no Shoes, because they should abide at home. Then would he confirm these antient Stories with Holy Writ, and shew how *Ecclesiast.* gives express Charge to all Husbands, that they should in no wise suffer their Wives to wander or stray abroad; knitting up his goodly Precepts and Examples with this shrewd Proverb;

**Whoso buildeth his house all of salowes  
 And pricketh his blind eyes over the salowes  
 And suffereth his wife for to seche halowes  
 He is worthy to be honged on the galowes.**

Sallows

Sallows are but mean Timber-wood to build on ; Fallows are uneven grounds for a blind Horse to ride on : And Hallows or Pilgrimages dangerous Waies for young Wives to go on. The first shews Improvidence, the second Rashness, the last Weakness\*.

\* Conventicles are Tickle places for Holy S flers ; Those are Booths for such Ware, as I could wish all young Bridegrooms to beware of : St. ——— is rather a Sanctuary for our Aunts than Saints. A place reported by *Borgius* for a frequent Receipt of Pilgrims : *Pomarius* in his *Summerian Annals*.

But all for nought, I set nat an hawke  
Of his proverbes, ne of his old sawe  
Ne I would not of him corrected be  
I hate him that my vices telleth me.

But all these goodly Precepts and Proverbs which he delivered in this sort unto me, were but as if he had sown Dust in the Air. I valued them not worth the Bloom of a Haw-thorn. For truth was, those who either corrected me, or reproved those Vices which they saw in me, were never after Cater-cosins with me ; for such Vices as we love, we defend ; nor can we easily forgo them without Distast.

K

Now

Now wold I saie you soth by **S. Thomas**  
**Why** that I rent out of his booke a  
 lefe  
**For** which he smote me, that I was  
 Defe.

The Book out of which I tore this Leaf, was entitled *Valerius Max.* a Roman Author, one who wrote much to our Re-proof and Dishonour. With him had he joyned *Theophrastus*, at whose Conceipts, he unmeasurably laughed, while I at his Laughter was grievously netled. With these had he bound up *St. Jerom's* Book against the Heretick *Jovinian*, together with *Tortulannus*, *Crisippus*, *Tortula*, and *Hellouis*, sometimes Abbess not far from *Paris*. And with these (to enlarge this his Miscellane Volume) had he bound together the Parables of *Solomon*, *Ovid* his Art of Loving, with sundry other Tracts or Treatises, discoursing of several Subjects. Now, would you know how he employed these Books? It was his accustomed manner every night when he had Leisure, to recreate himself in these Works: More Legends and  
 Lives

Lives had he of wicked Wives, than ye could repeat of good Wives throughout the Bible. All these had he purposely compiled, and were by him nightly recounted to make me discontented.

**For trusteth well, it is an impossible  
That any clerke would speake good of  
wives**

**But if it been of holy saintes lives---**

It is not now as it was in *Chancer's* daies; Present times have Clarks, who can approve and love this Sex. Such, I say, as having proper Liniments to woo with, natural Habiliments to win with, Canonical Faculties of their own to wed with, become no Reprovers, but Improvers of so Honourable a State. Wherein I hold them wise; Sure I am, they trace the steps of the wise: For all the Seven wise men of *Greece* were married: Albeit; there never wanted in any Age scornful Inveighers against women, yea, and Persecuters of them too in publick Theatres; Such were *Euripides*, *Hesiodus*, with many others, who out of some bitter Experience had of their own unhappy Choice, made that Sex, now and then, the

Subject of their Invection. It was a Stoick's Saying, No wise man was fit for a Woman, yet may a Woman be fit for a wise man; yea, and fit him too a Penniworth for all his Wisdom. But if a Woman would have Hearts-ease, and world at will, let her marry one of our Sedentary-Desk Clarks, or Pedantical Fools, who know not what the world means; for so may she have the world at will. Now in the very last Verse mentioned by our Poet, this good wife of *Bath* shadows out such jealous Clarks; who, when they suspect their Wives affected to Company, or any way addicted to Liberty, they will pull out some antient Story or other, discoursing of the Lives of Saintly or Holy Women, to reclaim them from their Gadding, and restrain them in their Freedom of living.

**Ne of none other woman neber the mo  
Who peincteth the Lion, tell me who?  
By God, if women had witten stories  
As clerkes han, within her oratozies &c.**

These Clarks (saith she) are of that condition as they will neither speak well of Wives nor any other Women. But they  
can



can paint a Lion that never saw his Feature, but by Report ; This is but only as it pleaseth the Painter. Had women written Stories ( as our *Theano*, with many more Mirrors of our Sex could have done ) they would have found Colours to display the vicious Natures of men, and discovered them guilty of more Enormities than the Issue-Male of *Adam* should ever redress.

**The childzen of Mercury and Venus  
Been in her working full contrarious.**

A Contrariety there is in the workings of *Mercury* and *Venus*. The Objects at which they aim their several Faculties, are wholly opposite, *Mercury* is for Wisdom and Speculation ; *Venus* for Riot and Sensual Meetings. Yea, their Dispositions are likewise divers ; for, Exaltation of the one is the Humiliation of the other ; which (as if this good-wife had been well read in an *Erra-Pater*, or some other Astronomical Author) she confirms with this Instance :

And thus God wote, Mercury is desolate  
late

In Pisces, where Venus is exaltate  
And Venus falleth where Mercury is  
reiled

Therefore no woman of no clerke is  
prieved.

*Mercury and Venus are ever in Opposition.*

*For true it is, Employment hath no time  
To offer Sacrifice to Venus Shrine.*

Elegantly shadowed by *Lucian*, feigning  
*Cupid's* Encounter with the Muses : "For  
"he that converseth with his Mind, by  
"whose Eye the Body is directed, will not  
"intermit his Affairs, to have his Mind  
"with Lust infected. *Mercury* admits him-  
"self no time to take a Turn in *Venus*  
"Walk.

The clerke whan he is old, and may  
nought do  
Of Venus werkes, not worth his old  
cho.

Long Study hath brought him to the *Sci-*  
*atica.*

*atica.* He hath so inur'd himself to the Speculative Part, as he is wholly out of use with the Practick. The Remainder of his daies (saith she) he spends like a Cricket, in a Chimney-Corner, in descanting on the Lightness of VVomens Natures, wherein he shews the poorness of his own Humor.

**But now to purpose, why I told thee  
That I was beaten for a booke parde  
Upon a night Jenkin, that was our fire  
Redde upon his booke, as he sate by the  
fire  
Of Eve first &c.**

But would you know (quoth she) more at large the cause of my Beating? I will now return to my Purpose, and fully relate to you the Occasion. Sir *Jenkin* (as he accustomedly used) having laid his Heel on the Ratting Crook, to pass the Winter-night away, or rather, as I expounded it, to disquiet me, took a Book in his Hand, (a various Volume of Numerous Authors) wherein he read of *Eve* first, how she by consenting to the Serpent, brought all Mankind to the Brink of Perdition. Which mortal Sore requir'd a Sovereign Salve,

even the Blood of the Lamb, which regain-  
ed Man, before lost, and restored our Blood,  
before corrupted.

**No here expresse of women may ye find  
That woman was the losse of all man-  
kind.**

*Jenkin* applies the Text he had read; but  
few or none of all his She-Audience will  
vouchsafe to make Use of his Application.  
But to the end he may work stronger upon  
his Wives Phantasie, he brings on a fresh  
Army of Examples in this kind. What did  
treacherous *Dalilah* to her *Sampson*, when  
by discovery of his Counsel, she robb'd him  
of his Hairs, wherein lay all his Strength;  
and after, of his Eyes, which gave him all  
his Light? What did *Deianira* to her *Her-  
cules*, when with *Nessus* poysoned Shirt, she  
set him all a fire? VVhat did *Zantippe* to  
*Socrates*, when she crown'd him with a  
Chamber-pot? which shameless Abuse of  
hers, when such as were his Friends, wished  
him to revenge, he washed off his Disgrace  
with this Patient Answer :

*It never yet was deem'd a Wonder  
To think that Rain should follow Thunder.*

She thundred so much before with her Tongue, as he could expect no less than Rain. What did *Pasiphae* Wife to *Minos* of *Crete*, whose Brutish Lust, and Monstrous Birth, have made her infamous to all succeeding times? What did *Clytemnestra* to her *Agamemnon*? What Dishonour did she to her Noble Parents *Tindarus* and *Leda*, when she not only expos'd her self to *Ægistus* Lust, but depriv'd her Princely Husband of Life? What did *Eriphyle* Wife of *Amphiaraus*, when for a Gold-Chain, she disloyally betrayed her Husband *Polynices*, when he had hidden himself, because he would not go to the Wars of *Thebes*? What Dispatch made *Livia* of her Husband, because she lov'd him too little? What Dispatch made *Lucilia* of hers, because she loved him too much? What Answer received *Latimerus* of *Arrius* (a Philosopher in *Alexandria*, in *Augustus* time) when he made his sorrowful Complaint unto him, how that he had a Tree in his Garden of such a strange Nature, as all his three wives, through



through meer despight, had hang'd themselves on it? O (quoth surly *Arrius*) do me the Courtesie, Dear Brother, to give me a Plant of that Blessed Tree, that it may grow and prosper in my Garden: For never did any yet plant it, that might make better use of it. What Wives in these later times do we now read of, who not only consented to see their Husbands murdered, but in the very Presence of those dislaughered Corps suffered themselves to be defiled? Some have driven Nails through their Brains; Others have depriv'd them of Life by poysonous Potions: As might be instanced in the Tragick Examples of *Dru-silla*, *Faustina*, *Corombona*, *Messalina*, and many others. All which Stories Sir *Jenkin* would read so distinctly, passionately, and devoutly, as if they were his Evening Orizons.

**And theretotshall he know no proverbes  
Than in this world there groweth grasse  
or herbes.**

He was a most proper Proverbial *Jenkin*, and could twit his testy Wife with store of such Proverbs as these, which he had at  
his

his Finger end. "It is better to live with  
 "Lions and Dragons, than in house with  
 "an angry woman. Better to abide on the  
 "Roof ever smoking, than below with a  
 "Wife ever chiding. Yea, so perverse,  
 "(said he) are they in Will, so contrary in  
 "Work, that they ever hate what their  
 "Husbands love, like what they loath.  
 "They cast away Shame, when they cast  
 "off their Smock. And for their Modesty,  
 "this is my Opinion, To see Beauty accom-  
 "panied by Chastity, were like a Gold Ring  
 "in a Swine's Snout.

**Who could wene, or who could suppose  
 The two, that in mine hart was and pine  
 And when I saw he would never fine  
 To reden on this cursed booke all night  
 All sodainly thre leues haue I plight  
 Out of his booke —**

How much this Good-wife was netled with his Nightly Lectures, she can hardly expresse her self, much less her Interpreter. Howsoever, one may easily collect by those furious Sparks of her Passion which issue forth, that there is a dangerous Fire within. For first, she takes a poor Revenge on  
 his

his Book, and tears it; Then she collars with him, and with a sound blow oth' Ear, throws him down backward into the Fire. Which he, never till now inflam'd with such unmanly Fury, requites with such a stroke on her Head, as senseless she falls on the Floor. Die she will needs, there's no Remedy; and the rather, as may be imagined, to make him guilty of her Death; and so raise him to the Ladder of his *Suspended* Advancement. But coming now at last to her self (for long had she been by her self) in this sort she re-affaies to course him, before she leave him.

**Oh, hast thou slain me false these I said  
For my lond thus hast thou murdred me?  
Er I be dedde, yet woll I ones kisse thee.**

Though she approach near the Gates of Death, she can open the Gate of her Teeth, and make the Poet's Observation true,

*Wheel of a Womans Tongue is like a River,  
Set it once going, it will go for ever.*

Well; It seems, before her Departure, she means to give him a strange Encounter. Sirrah Thief, do you hear! You that first  
enchanted

enchanted me, 'and so ravish'd my Love  
 from me ; you that have seiz'd of what was  
 due to me : Nay, you Blood-hound, you  
 that for my Land have thus murdered me,  
 draw near me, let me kiss thee, and so good  
 night to all the world. It shall not be said,  
 but I die in Charity ; So, close up mine Eyes,  
 I shall die presently. This dying Salute  
 could not chuse but drive poor *Jenkin* into  
 sundry Extreame. For, thought he, should  
 she die in spite after this manner, I should  
 make a fair End, but a worse Face in an Hal-  
 ter. Gladly would he (if she were not  
 past hope) recover her ; Down on his knees  
 he goes, and kisses her ; rubs and chafes  
 her ; though she needed small Chafing, be-  
 ing as hot at Stomach, as any Pepper. In  
 the end, he resolves to salute her, and if  
 her Stomach be come down, to reconcile  
 himself to her ; but still he fears, she is ei-  
 ther nearly dead, or wholly deaf to such  
 an Humor.

And

And nere he came, and kneled faire a-  
down-

And saied, dere suster, swete Allsoun  
As helpe me God I shall thee neuer  
smite

That I haue doen it is thy self to wite  
Forgebe it me, and that I thee beseeke  
And yet eft sones I hit him on the cheke--

A right fair and proper Acknowledgment of his Offence ; If she will but forgive him this rash and unadvis'd Assault, may he never desire any Favour, nor deserve any Love from her, nor in his greatest need receive any Succour, if ever he attempt any such presumptuous part thereafter. And yet alas (saith he) it was your Fault that we fell into this Debate : Had you rul'd your Tongue, I had held mine Hand ; yet forgive it me, dear Sister, sweet *Alyson*, and I promise you, upon *Jenkin's* Honesty, that your Tongue shall never force me to like Fury. While poor *Jenkin* is thus labouring in all humble manner to compose his own Peace, the dead Coarse revives, and fetcheth him such an overthwart Blow, as his Head rings again. Which (good man )  
sounds



sounds better in his Ear, than ever any of her sweet Kisses relished his Lip; For, thought he, if she have such lightness in her Fingers, she cannot but have some Liveliness at her Heart.

And said: these, thus much am I bewreke

Now will I die, I may no longer speke.

Like the humorous Lady in the Comedy, she is every foot dying, to make him the more despairing; Though she had already wreaked her self of him sufficiently, yet will she die with this Revenge, in spite of all his Remorse. And to confirm, that she is near Death, she concludes, "I may no longer speak: A dangerous Sign that she is past all hope of Recovery. For when a woman is laid speechless, the Bell may well ring out. But see what a bright Beam darted forth of this black Cloud!

---At

---At last, with mikell care and too  
 We fell accorded within our seluen two  
 He gaf me all the bridell in mine hond  
 To haue the gouernaunce of hous & lond  
 And of his tongue and of his hond also  
 And made hem brenne his booke anon tho.

The world is well amended with Dame *Alyson* ; She was even now for giving up the Ghost ; but holding it far better, upon some reasonable tearms, to live than die, she is content to take heart of Grease, and live a while longer ; Provided, she may have the Bridle in her own hand, the Government of his Estate, the Command of his Tongue and hand ; and lastly, that she may burn this Apocryphal Book, which bred all this Variance and Debate : To all which he accords, and so the Peace is made. A very beneficial Peace for *Jenkin*, albeit upon hard Tearms : For by this means, became all Occasions of future Difference prevented, a shrewd Dame to a peaceable Wife changed. And to HER no less useful, being for term of life, of all his Estate without any Compartner, absolutely seized. Never from that time did any Wife from *Denmark*

*mark* to *India* (to take her own Compass) live with Husband in more Unity, nor shew truer Arguments of Constancy, than she did to her *Jenkin*, , and all this without Hypocrisie.

---And so was he to me  
 I pray to God, that sitte in Maiestie  
 To blisse his soule, for his merch dere  
 Now woll I say my tale if ye woll here.

One True-Love Knot betwixt them both:  
 So faithful was his Love to her till the End,  
 as she cannot chuse but remember his Soul  
 in her Prayers after his End. After which  
 Orizon, she makes ready to tell her Tale.

The frere laugh tohan he had heard all  
 this  
 Now dame (qd he) so haue I joy oz blis  
 This is a long preamble of a tale.

The Frier, amongst others of her attentive Audience, starts up, and jeers this good Wife of *Bath*, for making so long a Preamble to her Tale, which, for ought that he knew, might prove as short ; and so resemble the *Mindian* Building, who, for making large Gates to a little City, were scorn-  
 L fully

fully advised by that Cynick *Diogenes*, to be very circumspect and wary lest their City should run out at their Gates.

And whan the Sompner herd the frere  
gale

Lo (qd this Sompner) by Goddes arms  
two

A frere woił entermete him evermo  
No good men, a flie and eke a frere  
Woił fall in euery dish and eke matere.

In defence of her, and opposition to the Frier, up stands the Sumner; who reproves the Frier for interrupting this Good-wife in her Tale; as if he should say, Marry Duck Sir Frier, Must you be ever intermedling in others Affairs? You will have an Oar, I see, in every one's Boat: and make that old Proverb good: *A Fly and a Frier will fall in every man's Dish and Matter.* What have you, Sir Frier, to do with her Preambulations? Whether she amble or trot it concerns you nothing. You hinder our Sport; Sit down, and give her way.

Ye wolt thou so sir Sompner (qd the  
frere)

Now by my fay I shall, oz er I go  
Tell of a Sompner such a tale oz two  
That all the folke shall laugh in this  
place.

What, Sir Sumner, are you so malapert?  
Must you control a Frier? Well! For  
your grave Reproof, I shall, before we part,  
tell a Tale or two of a Sumner, that will  
give Occasion enough of Laughter.

Now els frere I beshrew thy face  
(Quod this Sompner) and I beshrew  
me

But if I tell tales two oz thre  
Of freres —

The Sumner will not abate the Frier an  
Ace. He has a Tale or two to bestow on  
the Frier, and to fit him with his own  
Cool, before they come to *Syttingbourn*, to-  
wards which they were journeying. He sees  
his Patience already netled, and he hopes,  
when it comes to his Turn to tell his Tale,  
the Frier will not find himself much re-  
freshed.



**Our host cried peace —**

Like a peaceable Moderator, our Host, who was the very first Mover and Contriver of this Task, cries Peace. Let the woman go on (quoth he) with her Tale; How is it, that you fare as if you were drunk? You trouble us; Revenge your Distasts on one another in your Tales, when your time comes; If you prepare, we shall hear. Then turning himself to this Wife of *Bath*, he persuades her to go on, in these words;

**Doe Dame, tell forth your tale, and that  
is best**

**All redy sir (qd she) right as you lest  
If I haue licence of this worthy Frere  
Yes Dame, tell forth your tale, I woll it  
here.**

Go to Dame, let not their jarring trouble you. You know what you have to do; I hold it best, that you go on with your Tale. I am ready (saith she) to obey your will, provided that I may have this worthy Fri-er's Leave, whose Patience I have so far abus'd with my long Preface; which, although it solace not him, it gave me that  
Delight,

Delight, as I could have travell'd farther in this Discourse, and never been tired. At last, with the Frier's Permission, and Promise of Attention, she goes on with her Tale, in this sort.

## *A Comment upon the Wife of Bathes Tale.*



**A** the old daies of king Ar-  
tour  
(Of which the Bretons  
speken great honour —

Prince *Arthur*, the Son of *Uther*, born in *Cornwal*, was Crowned King of *Britain* in the Year 516. He was a Prince, for Spirit no less Couragious, than in all his Attempts Victorious. His Courage proclaimed him a man, and his good Fortune an happy man. He fought twelve several Battels against the *Saxons*, and al-

waies returned Conqueror. And having  
 now to his succeeding memory reduced his  
 Countrey to quietness, and planted the  
 Peaceful Olive in his Confines; to express  
 his true Love to Chivalry, and memorize  
 such who were not only Associates, but As-  
 sistants in his Victory; He constituted the  
 Order of the Round Table, in which Or-  
 der, he only retained such of his Nobility,  
 as were most Renowned for Vertue and  
 Chivalry. This Round Table he kept in  
 divers places, especially at *Carlion, Win-*  
*chester,* and *Camalet* in *Somersetshire*. In me-  
 mory of which Foundation, by the Testi-  
 mony of *Leyland*, there is yet to be seen in  
*Denbighshire*, in the Parish of *Llanfavan*, in  
 the side of a Stony Hill, a place artificially  
 compos'd, wherein be four and twenty  
 Seats for men to sit in, some less, and some  
 bigger, according to their several Statures;  
 cut out of the main Rock by man's Hand;  
 where young people coming to seek their  
 Cattel, use to sit, play, and repose: They  
 commonly call it *Arthur's Round Table*. To  
 insist on those Fabulous Relations which  
 former times have broached touching this  
 Prince, I will not, but refer them, who  
 take

take delight in the Report of such Wonders;  
to our Old Wives Legends. Let it suffice  
them, that in this King's daies (if they will  
take the word of a good Old Wife of  
*Bath*)

**All was this lond fulfilled of fairy  
The Elfe quene, with her joly com-  
pany &c.**

King *Oberon*, Queen *Mab*, Prince *Cricket*,  
and his Paramour *Pig-Widgeon*, with all  
their fair Company, used to repair hither,  
and dance a Cinque-pace upon the Meads,  
(if they had so much Art among them.) Yea,  
by usual resorting and consorting together,  
they became so familiar with our Milk-  
maids on the Downs, as they would not  
only sport with them, but woo them and  
win them; whence the Poet:

*Pug wooed Jug, a wily Cub,  
To drink with him a Sillibub,  
Which drunk, they so familiar grew,  
As Jug became one of the Crew.*

But this (saith our Wife of *Bath*) was  
many hundred Years ago. King *Oberon's*  
Race is quite extinct and gone, or else con-

fin'd to some other remote Island, where they reside. And she gives a Reason of this.

**For there as wont to walk was an Elfe  
There walketh now the limitour him-  
selfe.**

\* Limitors and holy Friers supply the Place of Fairies. Their Orizons, Anthems and Prayers have conjur'd down all Fayries. Before times, young Wenches durst not safely go by themselves: Every Bush had his Hob-thrush, but the world is well amended.

*\* A Proprias Limites Terris imponendo, & remouentibus Anathemata denunciando dicti, ut veresimile est.*

**Women may go safely by and down  
In euery bush, and vnder euery tre  
There nis no other incubus but he.**

Safe and secure may now our Maids be. No *Incubus*, Goblin, or Night-mare shroud themselves in the Bushy Thickets to surprize them, or with a cold Sweat in the Night-times to oppress them: The devout Frier hath scar'd them. There is no other *Incubus*  
but



but he. Neither need they fear any Dishonour; for nothing but holy Honesty attends the Frier.

**And so tell it, that this king Artour  
Had in his house a lusty bachelor.**

Amongst others of his Princely Retinue, for whom only this brave Victorious Prince reserved his *Round Table*, one Lusty Youth there was in his Court, who giving Reins to his Desire, encountred a young amorous Maid, and ravish'd her; The Report of this Rape within few daies came to King *Arthur's* Ear, who, to expiate the Guilt of so foul a Crime, and free his Royal Court of all Dishonour, denounced upon this wanton Courtier due Censure: Which Censure (as may be probably conceived) was grounded upon the Statute then, as now in Force; That he who committed any Rape should suffer Death. Albeit, in those daies, an especial kind of Death was inflicted on the Ravisher, and that was, he should lose his Head; to counterpoize this Offence, in depriving another of her Maiden-head.

But

But that the Quene, and other ladies  
mo

So long prayden the king of grace  
Till he his life graunted in that place  
And yaued him to the quene —

As it hath been ever accounted the highest Honour for Knights to afford succour and relief to distressed Ladies, so hath it been the custom of Noble and Affable Ladies to commiserate the Miss-fortunes or Overtures of dejected Knights. Such Favour found this young Gentleman at the Hands of his Queen and her Ladies: who, no sooner heard of this Judgment of Death pronounced upon him, than with Prayers and Tears (prevalent Suitors to a compassionate Prince) they labour'd to reverse that Sentence, and afford some comfort to his approaching Ruine. As they pray'd, so they prevail'd; The King (a Mirror in his time, both for Justice and Mercy) gives this Knight's Life to his Queen, to dispose of, as shall best like her. Nor need he fear ought else than a gracious Usage at her Hands, from whose Sollicitancy he had received his Reprieve, if not Reversal of Judgment.

The

The quene thanketh the knig with all her  
might

And after this, thus spake she to the  
knight &c.

The Queen, after due thanks rendered unto the King, for speeding so well in her Suit, takes Opportunity to talk with this Knight ; and tels him how, indeed, by her means, she had procur'd his Reprieve for a time ; but yet he was not to hold himself safe nor secure from danger. His Life was given her, and she would bestow it on him, provided that he performed what she propounded, and assailed what she demanded.

I graunt thee thy life, if that thou canst  
tell me

What thing is it, that women most de-  
sire

Beware, and kepe thy necke bone from  
the iren.

A necessary Caution for this condemned Gentleman. As if she should say, Go to Sir, your Fact was hainous, for which you have here your Sentence. The Sentence of Death, you know, to be already pronounced ; to  
attemper

attemper the sharpness of which Censure, I have interceded for you; and so far prevailed, as it is now in my hands whether you live or die. Nor is my Brest so steeled, as altogether insensible of Compassion. Yet must such a Crime as you have committed, sustain the difficulty of some Task before it be remitted. This Question then you must resolve me, if ever you mean to expect any Favour from me. It concerns our Sex, as from our Sex you are to acknowledg the Benefit of your Life.

**And if thou canst not tell it me anon  
Yet wold I yeue the leue for to gon  
A twelue month and a day, to seke and  
lere  
An answere sufficient in this matere.**

If the Question seem too intricate, I will give you a twelve-moneths time to consider of it; yet with Sureties for your Return at the Years end. Go to, this is all the Favour I will shew you.

**Who was the knight, and sorrowfully he  
sleeth.**

Mightily perplexed was this distressed  
Knight;

Knight ; but seeing there is no Remedy, but he must either assail this Question, or despair of Safety ; he prepares himself for his Journey. Wherein, you may suppose, what Coasts he frequents, with what people of all Qualities and Conditions he consorts ; he leaves no place unsought, where he conceives the least hope that this Question may be assail'd.

**But he ne couth ariuen in no colt  
Where as he might find in this matere  
Two creatures according yfere.**

As many Men so many Minds. A whole College of Physicians had not more different Opinions ; Nor all the antient Philosophers more discrepant Tenets concerning Felicity. Some said it was Riches that did most delight them. Others thought Honours did most content them. Others held that Gorgeous Attire did highliest take them. Some said Mirth, others said Delight in Bed, others to be Widows oft. Some, and those of the self-same Sex (for who knows better their hearts than themselves) taking compassion of this poor perplexed Knight, and desirous to satisfie him in what they could,

unri-



unriveted the very Secrets of their own Brefts, and told him plainly what of all things in the world they for their parts most desired, and what of all others most contented them. For my part, said one, there is nought that delights me more, than to have Hearts-ease, to be cheared, cherished, flattered and pleas'd; ever to have my Words seconded, my Arguments maintained, and in all my Business to have my self duly attended. Another of the same Sex, and for her Opinion, by all likelihood of the same Sect, starts up, and affirms; That for her part, she lov'd nothing better, than to be free and at her own Dispose; to be countermanded by none, to do what she list; not to be reproved for any Vice that she loved; to be esteemed wise; more free than nice; more buxom than precise.

For trewly there nis none of us all  
 If any wight woll clawe vs on the gall.  
 That we will like —

Here this Good-wife of *Bath* puts in her Vye, and confirms their Opinion, who held that nothing delighted a Woman more than

to

to be soothed, seconded, and humored. For  
 whosoever (saith she) use to claw us on  
 the Gall, or nettle us, they shall find us to  
 have Stomachs. We cannot endure to be  
 controlled; give us the Swinge, or they  
 that oppose us, are sure to be swinged. A-  
 gain, If we be subject to any Vice, we  
 cannot brook that any other's Eye should  
 prie into our Bosoms. When we are light-  
 est, we desire to be held demurest; when  
 most Vitious, to be reputed most Vertuous.  
 They are lov'd most by us, who defend our  
 Vices; They offend us most, who stile not  
 our Vices Vertues.

And some men saie, that grete Delite  
 haue we

For to ben holde stable and eke secre  
 And in one purpose stedfastly to dwell  
 And not bewray thing that men vs tell.

Here she proceeds in the Delivery of  
 their several Opinions; when she shews,  
 how some held it their highest Delight to  
 be esteemed constant in their Courses, se-  
 cret in their Counsels; to hold their first  
 purpose immutably, and to conceal whatso-  
 ever was recommended to their Secrecy.

But

But how lightly (saith she) we of our Sex  
set by keeping of Counsel, that Fable of  
\* *Midas*, reported by *Ovid*, will sufficiently  
discover.

\* *Bacchus* Bounty so freely bestowed, was not so discreetly  
employed by *Midas*, as *Neptunus's* Gifts were by *Theseus*:  
This brought *Midas* to the Brink of Misery: Those wrought  
*Theseus* safe Delivery.

— Will ye here the tale?  
*Ovide*, among other things small  
Said, *Midas* had vnder his long heeres  
Growing on his heed, two asses ears.

*Mida*, quasi *μηδὲν ἴδων*, because his Eies  
were blinded or filmed with Covetousness.  
He was King of *Phrygia*, and one of the rich-  
est that ever reign'd. The Poets feign, that  
after he had restored *Silenus* unto *Bacchus*,  
to gratifie his Courtesie, *Bacchus* promised  
him what Gift soever he should demand;  
Upon which Offer, he desired that what-  
soever he touched, might be into Gold  
turned. By which means, the very Meat  
which was provided for his Repast, became  
Gold; so as, though he surfett'd in Gold,  
he famish'd for Food. Well then deserved  
he

he an Asses Ears for his Labour, who could not satisfie his Desires without starving Nature. Now to cover this Deformity ( as may be supposed ) he wore purposely long Hair, so as' none knew of it, save only his Wife, whom he especially trusted, and to whose Secrecy those long Ears of his were only disclosed. She, who had solemnly vow'd never to disclose what he had recommended to her Trust; both to keep her Oath, and yet disgorge her Stomach of that Secret, which lay so fretting and frying on her, as she must needs be delivered of it; resolved one day to go down to a Marish near adjoyning, far remote from the sight or search of man; where, just like as a Bittern puts his Beak in a Reed, and through the hollownes of the Cane makes a shrill and sharp sound, so lay *Midas* Wife with her Mouth to the Water, using these Words; *Dost thou hear, thou Marish? my Husband has a pair of Asses Ears; This is a Secret, none but my self knows of it; I would not for a world impart it. So, now my Heart is eas'd: My Lace would have broke, if I had not disclos'd it.*

M

The

The remnaunt of the tale, if ye will here  
Redeth Duide, and there ye may it lere.

This Story you may read in the Eleventh  
Book of his *Metamorphosis*, where the Rea-  
son of this Transformation is lively expres-  
sed.

This knight, of which my tale is speci-  
ally

When that he sawe, he might not come  
thereby

This is to say, what women louen most  
Within his herte sorowful was his  
goste, &c.

Many Coasts and Countries had this di-  
stressed Knight search'd, sundry Folkes  
Judgments and Opinions had he sought, yet  
is he no nearer, than when he began. Diffe-  
rent were their Conceits, according to the  
Difference of their Minds. Nothing was  
definitely concluded, because their Judg-  
ments were so diversly distracted. On draws  
the time, in which his Summons calls him  
home; which, rather than he will not keep,  
in regard of those dear Friends Words en-  
gaged for him, he resolves to suffer a thou-  
sand



and Deaths. Thus perplexed, wanders  
this Pilgrim Knight, hopeles of any Re-  
solve for his Question, and consequently  
out of all hope to procure his Pardon.

But home he goth, he might not sojourne  
The day was come, he must home re-  
turne

And in his way, it hapned him to ride  
In all his care, under a forest side  
Where he saw upon a daunce go  
Of ladies foure and twenty, and yet  
mo &c.

Amidst these distracted Cares of his, as he  
travels homeward (for approached was the  
time of his Return, with a general Expe-  
ctance of his Resolve) as he casts his trou-  
bled Eye aside, he sees a Company of dain-  
ty and delicate Ladies, Sylvanes or Wood-  
Nymphs all, leading a pleasant Dance near  
to the Forrest side; Towards them he ad-  
dresseth his Course, in hope to receiye some  
Comfort from them. But to increase his  
Anguish, no sooner draws he near them,  
than they vanish.

No creature saw he that bare life  
 Sawe in the grene, he saw sitting an old  
 wife  
 A fouler wight there may no man deuise.

Beauty was gone, and Deformity left.  
 All those amiable Ladies were quite vanish-  
 ed; and none remaining but an old Hag,  
 whose sight begot in him more Loathing  
 than Loving. Those, whom former times  
 have painted out for the most ugly, and  
 worst-favoured Creatures that ever breath-  
 ed; even *Nays*, *Catastes*, *Thestylis*, were  
 dainty Paragons in Nature \*.

\* This Mother-Midnight, shap'd like a Sweden Hag, and by  
 all likelihood the Fayries Midwife.

Again the knight the old wife gan arise.

A proper Salute, and as mannerly a Re-  
 greet, you may expect, as an old Trot of  
 her shape could afford. For thus she seems  
 to accost him: 'God may you bless, young  
 ' Gentleman; for you look like a bonny  
 ' gamesom Youth. What way bound you  
 ' so fast down by this uncouth Forrest? Sure,  
 ' if I miss not my Mark, you are out of your  
 ' Aim;

' Aim ; for this is no High-way ; Sooth in  
 ' God, there is somewhat or other, that  
 ' gripes you by th' Heart ; for your fresh  
 ' flowry Countenance looks pale. Is it Love,  
 ' a God's Name, or some like giddy thing  
 ' that girds you ?

— Tell me what ye seek by your say  
 Peradventure it may the better be  
 This old folke conne much thing (qd she)

We old Trots are good for something.  
 We have many fine Medicines in store, that  
 lustier Hussies little wot on. Read your  
 Rede to me then boldly, you shall find me  
 an honest old woman ; And a true trusty  
 Friend in a Corner, though she be never so  
 ore-spent by Nature, may do a Buxsom  
 Boy a Pleasure.

My lefe mother (qd this knight) certaine  
 I nam but deed, but if that I can sain  
 What thing it is, that women most de-  
 sire

Could ye me wisse, I wold quite well  
 your hire.

His time limited is so short, and so spee-  
 dy his Task, as it admits no Delay. He dis-

Covers unto her the reason of his Raunge in that desert and unfrequented Forrest. The Question that he is injoynd to assoil upon pain of Life, he declares unto her. Albeit small Comfort he expect from her. This he no sooner imparts, than she returns him this unexpected Answer to bring him back to himself, from this high-beat Path of his approaching Danger.

**Plight me thy trouth here in my hand**  
( *qd she* )

**The next thing that I require of the  
Thou shalt it do; if it be in thy might  
And I will tell it you, or it be night.**

Dapper Youth, quoth she, this Geer is of some weight ; It is a dear wade, when your Life lies upon last Stake. Well, go to ; you have travell'd far, and you are never a Chip the wiser. You shall see an old Wife has some Wit. But first you must requite me, or I mean never to resolve you. Give me your Hand-Promise, that after I have told you this Question, you will grant whatsoever I shall demand of you, if it be in your power ; Do not deny me, lest I leave you as I found you.

**Haue**

**Haue here my trought (qd the knight) I  
graunt.**

Life is sweet ; he will neither deny her,  
nor delay her, but vows truly to perform  
whatsoever shall be injoynd by her.

**Than qd she, I may me well auaunt  
Thy life is safe—**

Be of good chear then. Your Life is as  
safe as mine, and safer too ; for I have one  
Foot ith' Grave, as you may see, already.  
I will so truly resolve it, as the Queen her-  
self, who first put this Question to you, shall  
before all that fair Assembly maintain it,  
that the proudest she that wears a Kerchief  
on her Head, shall not deny it. Withdraw  
your self into that Arbour, and I will  
tell you.

**— Without lenger speche  
Tho roboned she a pistel in his ere  
And bad him to be glad, and haue no fere.**

The preciousst Ear-Ring that ever he  
wore. What he had sought for among so  
many Beauteous Damosels, in so many fre-  
quented places, in such eminent Courts,



and could never attain, he finds now in the Brest of an old withered Hag, in a wild Forrest, far remote from the Seat or Sight of men. Suppose him then, thus provided, now approaching the Court, where he is expected according to his Day limited, to return his Answer, where he is either to come off with Honour or Danger.

(The quene her self, sitting as a iustise)  
 Assembled ben, his answere for to here  
 And afterward this knight was bode a-  
 pere.

A great Assembly of women are purpose-ly come to Court to hear this Knight's Answer, and to give their Judgments, as may be thought, whether this Question to him proposed, were by him truly or no resolved. A general Silence by an O Yes, thrice publicly cried, was to all Women enjoyned. A Task, I grant of no small difficulty, but this was, to th'end this Knight should not be interrupted. The Knight, after his Appearance, and so free Audience, with a shrill Voice and stout Spirit, as one confident of his Answer, asloiles the Question with this Resolution :

My liege lady : generally, qd. he  
 Women desiren to haue souerainte  
 As well ouer her husbandes as her loue  
 And for to ben in maistry hem aboue  
 This is your most desire, though ye me  
 kill

Doth as you list, I am here at your will.

There is nothing which a woman desires  
 more than Sovereignty ; Command is her  
 Content ; Dominion her Minion ; her will  
 her Weal. This the Poet confirms :

*Nor Love, nor Life, nor Liberty, nor Land,  
 Can please a Wenck, unless she haue Command.*

Sovereignty is such a Pearl in her Eye,  
 that Life is a loathing unless it be attending.  
 Thus hath he returned his Answer ; now  
 hear what Applause it receives in this fair  
 Fœminine Assembly.

In all the court nas there wifene maid  
 He widow, that contrarted that he said  
 But said, he was woorthy han his life.

By general Voice and Vote he is held  
 worthy to haue his Life. Their own Bo-  
 soms else would haue condemned them, and  
 netled

netled the old rivell'd Hag, from whom he receiv'd that Answer, and who all the time had been silent, to have stirred her glib Tongue among them. Now imagine, after this Question so fully resolved, and the whole Court of Women ready to be dissolved, with what unexpected Joy this Late perplexed Knight was transported ; which, (behold the Mutability of all Earthly Comforts, ever sweeter in Ambition than Fruition) was as quickly exiled, by another Occurrent which now succeedeth.

And with that word, up start the old  
wife

Which that the knight fond sitting on  
the grene

Wherby (qd she) my soueraine lady quene--

No sooner was this Question resolved, the Knight pardoned, and all ready to depart, than up starts this old Trot, and appeals to the Queen, who late as Chief Justice ; to whom she exhibits her Petition, after that, like another *Omphada*, she had unnimibly rushed down upon her four Quarters, and in her best homely manner had done her Reverence : “ Madam, I am an  
“ old

“ old woman, and so must youngest here be,  
 “ if they live to’t; yet an old woman de-  
 “ serves her due as well as the youngest:  
 “ This gay Knight, simply though I stand  
 “ here, was taught by me his Answer: for  
 “ which he plighted me his Troth, that  
 “ whatsoever I should demand at his Hand,  
 “ if it lay in his power, he would perform.

Before the court than pray I the sir  
 knight

(QD. She) that thou me take unto thy  
 wife

For well thou wottst, that I haue kept thy  
 life.

You shall not say, Sir Knight, that I love  
 you ill; both to save your Life, and procure  
 you a Wife, is no mean Courtesie. I mean  
 to bestow no worse than my self on you;  
 and many a poor Knight would be heartily  
 glad of a worse Choice. You know Pro-  
 mise is Debt; nor can you pay your Debt,  
 unless you tender your self.

If I say false, say nay upon thy say.  
 This knight answerd, alas and wel-  
 way.

She

She puts him to his Book-Oath, but he will neither take it, nor her by his goodwill. He must now turn over a new Leaf, and act another fresh Scene of Sorrow. For, thinks he, if Life be nothing without Society, what may that Life be worth, where he must live with her whom he eternally loths? Thusto live were to die ; yea to die were to live, rather than embrace such a Life. Better thinks he, it had been by many Degrees, to have stood Mute, and submitted himself to the extreamest Censure, than upon such hard terms to have procur'd an Answer, the issue whereof will undo him for ever. He resolves then to make her a fair Proffer, the Acceptance whereof, though it should make him a Beggar, yet in his Concept infinitely happier.

**Take all my good. and let my body go.  
 Nay qd she, than I threwe vs both two.**

As if he should say, I confesse freely, that I have receiv'd an incomparable Courtesie from you; being the next Means under God and my Gracious Sovereign, of preserving my Life; Nor will I deny but I promis'd you upon the Answer I receiv'd  
 from



from you, whatsoever were in my power, I would freely and without exception give you. But little did I expect that my self should be the Gift. Alas ! You are an old Woman, and should think of other matters, than such youthful Marriages. For what would this beget but Jealousie in you, Discontent in me, and some miserable End to us both ? This Disparity in our Years, can make no true Harmony in our Affections. Age, generally is more given to the World, than the Flesh ; Accept then of my Fortunes, I lay them down at your Feet, and leave me to the wide world to raise me an Estate. I have nothing too dear for you but my self ; release me of that, and take all. This, he thought would have prevail'd, but he is far deceiv'd ; She expressly answers him, that it was not his Fortunes that could content her ; No, nor all the precious Ore, Metals, nor Minerals of the whole Earth. As his own Life was by her means saved, so expects she that his own Person shall recompense it. Set your heart then at rest, saith she, as you receiv'd from me the Benefit of your Life, so nothing will content me but being your Wife and your Love.

My

**My loue (qd he) nay my Dampnation  
 Alas that any of my nation &c.**

My Love, my loathing ! Hanging and wedding go by destiny, and he holds it disputable, whether his loss of life or choice of such a Wife, were the greater Misery. He holds *Martial's* opinion in his affiance to this woman.

*Paula likes me, so shall I never her,  
 Because she's old, unless she elder were.*

He could be the better contented to marry her, if he were but persuaded that he should shortly become her Survivor; mean time, this is his conceipt; though, he received from her the benefit of his life, yet he holds his life at too high a rate to be enthralled to her love. Neither, as he verily thinks, would this disgrace which he should thus incur, by ingaging himself to this unweldy Beldame, who was a very far-del of Diseases, reflect only upon himself, but on his whole Nation: For to describe her, and bestow on her her true Character, what was she, but a sapless seer stock without verdure; a crawling creeping Cricket,  
 without

without vigour ; a proportionless feature without favour ? One , whose mouth like a common sewer, was ever driveling; whose Nose, like a perpetual Limbeck, was ever dropping. The *Sciatica* had taken Possession of her Hip ; the Megrim of her Head ; An aged Film had quite covered her Eyes ; And an incessant Cough taken seizure of her Lungs. Her Mouth was discharged of the Grinders ; from which issued such a Steam, as it would have put a Serjeant in mind of his Mortality. Yet must this proper Puss be this Knight's dainty Bride ; For howsoever he hold himself highly disparaged, his Nation dishonoured, his succeeding Hopes eternally dashed ;

———— The end is this, that he  
 Constrained was, that nedes must he her  
 wed  
 And taketh this old wife, and goeth to  
 bed.

He must perform his Promise ; Where women are Judges, the worst of their Sex must not be wronged. Now what a comfortable Bridal this was, let them judge, who have known the misery of a Loathed Bed.

Bed. But no Remedy in cases of such inevitable Necessity ; He must put on the best Countenance he can, and learn to dissemble with the World, the bitterest of whose Discontents he hath now sufficiently tasted.

**Now wolden some men say parauenture  
That for my negligence, I do no cure  
To tellen you the joy and the array  
That at the feast was that ilke day.**

Now some (saith this old Wife of *Bath*) will perhaps expect that I should speak of the Joy and Jollity, Feasts and Solemnity of this goodly Marriage, As first, how the Bride and Bridegroom were attired, with what Companies attended, what Dainty Cates were provided, how the Feasters, were ranked, with what Musick and Melody cheared.

**To the which thing answere shortly I  
shall**

**I say there was no joy ne feest at all.**

They that expect any jovial Day at such a Bridal-Day, are much deceived ; There was nothing there but Pouting, Louring, and Cloudy Weather ; All things were out  
of

of temper ; No Consort could keep any Concord, when the Chief of the Feast were at such mortal Discord. They that came to their Table, might be sure to find store of Foul in every Corner ; Foul Looks, Foul Lips, Foul Limmen. Well may we think then ;

**G**ret was the sorow the knight had in his  
thought  
**W**han he was with his wife a bedde  
ibrought.

He is now entring his Mount *Ætna*, or his *Caucasus* rather ; for she is cold enough for any season. A perpetual Feaver now afflicts him. Rest he cannot, yet may she rest, and will not.

**H**e waloweth, and turneth to and fro.  
**H**is old wife lay smiling euermo  
**A**nd said : O dere husbonde, O benedicite  
fareth every knight thus as ye ?

While he makes his Bed his Rack, turning to and fro, tossing and wallowing in his Sheets of Shame, for so he holds them, his Bed-fellow expostulates the Cause with  
N him,



him, and with a comfortable Smile, as you may gather, by her amiable Favour and Feature, thus accoasts him; ‘ Good God, ‘ Dear Husband, what a tossing and turning you make! Fares every Knight with ‘ his Wife as you do? Is this the Comfort ‘ of a first Nights Marriage? Marry, Fie ‘ upon Wedding and this be it. Are King ‘ *Arthur’s* Knights so dainty of their Love, ‘ as they will tender no Benevolence to ‘ them from whom they receive the Benefit ‘ of their Life? Sure, others are neither so ‘ coy nor curious, so dainty nor dangerous ‘ of their Busses nor Embraces as you be. ‘ Am not *I* she, who preserved your Life ‘ from Danger, and since have married you, ‘ which deserves some Honour? How is it ‘ then, that like a mad man, you shew this ‘ Distemper, and with-hold that Freedom ‘ of Love from me, which you ought in duty to tender? First Night had been no ‘ such great matter, if you had been more ‘ sparing of your Love hereafter.

**Fe, what is my guilt? for gods loue tell  
me it**

**And it shall be amended if I may.  
Amended (qd this knight) alas nay  
nay &c.**

Sure my Guilt cannot be so great, but if you look on the Means of your Safety, that will excuse me; But if I have been in ought blame-worthy, do but impart it, and I shall amend it. Amend it (quoth the Knight) that's impossible. When I look on thy Deformity, it makes me quite forget the means of my Safety. Thy Presence makes my Bed loathsom; thy Old Age and base Birth make my Life wearisom. No wonder then, if I thus tosse, turn and turmoil my self, when I see no Object that may afford to my restless Misery the least Hope of Comfort. Burst then, poor hapless Heart, since thou art destitute of all Hope, and deprived of all Means of Help.

**Is this (qd she) the cause of your unrest?  
Ye certainly qd he, no wonder tis.**

What, saith she, is this all you can object against me? Is it my Base Parentage; or  
N 2 Mean

Mean Personage the only Reason of your Dislike? Yes, answers he, what Reasons can be greater, when neither outward Worth, nor Equality of Birth suits with mine Honour?

**Now sir (qd he) I couth amend all this  
If that me list, er it were daies three  
So well ye might beare you vnto me.**

Well Sir, these are no such great Eyesores, but they might be cured; yea, and before three Daies were expired, if you demeaned your self towards me as became a Loving Husband. But whereas you stand so much upon Gentility of Blood; Trust me, sweet Spouse, these Titles are but Trifles. Those only are to be held generous, who are Vertuous; those Ignoble, who are Vicious. Nobility of Blood, if it want inward Worth, is soon corrupted; and the highest Family without Vertue, stained. It is true, we derive from our Ancestors our Descents, yet if we come short of them in Deserts, we more dishonour them, than we are honoured by them. For howsoever they confer on us their Inheritance, they cannot leave us their Goodness; That must be by our  
own

own Endeavours obtained, not to us Lineally derived. He is a right Gentleman, that has gentle Conditions; from whence he took his Name, as it agreed best with his Nature.

**Wel can the wise poete of florence  
That hight Daunte, speke in this sentence.**

*Daunt*, a Famous *Italian* Poet, of whom succeeding times have given this Approved Testimony;

*Ingenuous Daunt, who had the Art to fit  
His Subject to his Verse, his Verse to it.*

He was Laureat in his Time, and of such a pregnant present Concept, as he was no less honoured by the Eminentest Princes then living; who joy'd to be his *Mecenas*: than memorized after his Death with a rich and sumptuous Monument, with his *Effigies* to Life engraven on it.

**Lo in such manner time is Dauntes tale  
 Ful selde up riseth by his bꝛanches  
 finale**

**Prowesse of man : for God of his good-  
 nesse**

**Wol that we claim of him our gentil-  
 nesse.**

Here this old Woman shews her self graced with inward Worth, though she want outward Parts, in a free Delivery of her Reading both in Poetry and Philosophy. Wherein she first repeats *Daunt's* Divine Sentence, how we are to attribute all glory unto God, from whom we receive not only outward Prowess, but all inward Goodness. From our Elders, we may receive Fortunes and Temporal Blessings, which usually prejudice most, where they are possess'd most : But for inward Abilities, it is not in their power to derive them to us, nor bestow them on us. And he gives the Reason, which he confirms with a Familiar Instance : For, saith he, Should Goodness be derived lineally, then where there is any goodness in the Ancestor, it should diffuse and propagate it self to all his Family ; None that descended from him, should be addicted



addicted to any Villany : There would be an Heritage of Goodness in the whole Linage. Just as Fire, should you carry it into the darkeſt Cell betwixt Heav'n and Frozen *Caucasus*, yet would it, according to its Natural Quality and Operation, give Light and Heat ; The Darkneſs of the Houſe could neither obſcure nor extinguiſh it ; till what fed it were conſumed, and ſo it ſelf became quenched. But it is far otherwiſe with Gentry, it derives no ſuch Native Motion nor Operation from her Family.

**For god it woot, men may full often find  
A lozdes ſon done ſhame and villany —**

As Baſtard-Slips take ſeldom deep Root, ſo the freeſt and moſt generous Plants bring not alwaies forth moſt Fruit. The hope-fulleſt Cyens are oft-times moſt degenerate. *Catiline* and *Cethegus* were a ſhame to their Fathers ; So were *Semphronia* and *Lucilla* to their Mothers. He or ſhe then (ſaith this Moral Bride) that would be accompted Generous, let him be Vertuous ; He cannot be a Gentleman, that is not endowed with a Gentle Mind. Be he or ſhe never ſo nobly Deſcended, if Debauch'd, they are

but Peasants. Neither can we justly challenge to our selves any Honour from our Ancestors, if we second them not in Actions worthy the Renown of those Ancestors. It is neither Priority of Place, nor Nobility of Race, that deserves Approving, but Gentleness and Affability, which from God have their sole Beginning.

**Thinketh how noble, as saith Valerius  
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius.**

*Tullus Hostilius*, of whom so glorious a mention is made by Lib. 7. C. 4.  
*Valerius Maximus*, was the third King of the Romans, a Prince of Singular Sobriety, a singular Observer of all Vertues; Inſomuch as his own Goodneſs rais'd him to that Greatneſs. His Poverty could not keep him from Imperial Dignity, becauſe the Eyes of all good men were upon him; by whoſe general Suffrage he was elected, and to a Regal Seat advanced. Peruſe likewiſe the Works of *Seneca* and *Boetius*, two Authors moſt ſententiouſly Divine, and you ſhall find (ſaith this old Bride) that it is gentle Deeds that make one truly Gentle. By all which, ſhe expreſſly concludes, that  
an

an Honourable Descent infers not ever  
Eminence of Desert; For as one may be  
Low-bred and well dispos'd, so may one be  
High-born, and ill-affected.

**And theretofore dere husband, I thus con-  
clude**

**All were it that mine anceters were rude  
Yet may that hie god, and so hope I  
Graunt me grace to liue vertuously.**

Surcease Husband, to twit me thus with  
Baseness of Birth; Though mine Ancestors  
were rude, yet if God give me Grace to be  
good, my Vertuous Life shall ennoble my  
low Line. Let not this therefore so much  
distast you, though my Descent be mean, I  
purpose to supply that Want by Deserts, if  
that may please you.

**And there as ye of pouertie me repzene  
The hie God, on whom that we bilene  
In wilful pouerte chese to lede his life &c.**

Secondly, Whereas you seem so much to  
tax me for my Poverty; That Condition is  
rather to be loved, than reproved. He who  
may be a Pattern to us all for Imitation, pre-  
ferred voluntary Poverty before any other  
Condition.

Condition. Neither may we think would He have chus'd it, if there had been any Evil in it. The Philosopher saith, To be silent in Prosperity, chearful in Adversity, in both to shew an Indifferency, is the highest Pitch of Philosophy. It is the Saying of *Sage Seneca*, and other Learned men, That he only is Prosperous and Happy, who contents himself with his Poverty; Admit he be not worth a Shirt to his back, he has Wealth enough, who holds himself content. He is the richest, whose Desires are fewest; He the poorest, whose Wishes are fullest. There is no Poverty but Sin properly. *Juvenal* speaks merrily:

*He that's so poor he is not worth a Groat,  
Before a Thief may sing a merry Note.*

Yea, to describe more fully the Excellency of Poverty; It is a Sovereign good, though generally hateful, inwardly fruitful. An expedite Dispatcher of Business; For howsoever we pay for Expedition in these Courts on Earth, this is that leads us in the expedite Course to the Court of Heaven; It enlighteneth our Understanding, enliveneth our Conceiving, rectifieth our Judgment,

ment, if in these Gusts of seeming Affliction we be patient. These, and many other excellent Fruits produceth Poverty, though few or none entertain it willingly. Nay, which is more, it brings Man to the Knowledge of himself, and of God, who, for his Love to Man, humbled himself. Besides, It is a very clear Mirror or Looking-Glass, wherein he may distinguish Friends from Foes, and try whom he may safely trust. Reprove me then no more (Gentle Sir) for my Poverty; nor grieve your self at that which brings with it more Comfort than Misery.

**Now sir, eke of elde ye reprieved me  
And certes sir, though none autorize  
Were in no booke ye gentils of honour  
Saine that men shuld an old wight ho-  
nour &c.**

Lastly Sir, Whereas you despise me for mine Age; If no Authority did enjoin you, nor no Book inform you, that Age were to be revered, even your own Gentility would exact this from you, and that inbred Civility which Nature hath planted in you. When you see an Old Man, for the Re-  
rence



rence you bear unto his Age, you clepe him Father. Will you contemn me then, because I am like your Mother? In this respect, you should rather cherish, than discourage me, honour, than disparage me.

*Gray Hairs were once in reverence till now,  
So were deep Furrows in an Aged Brow.*

Believe it Sir, though \* Gray Hairs be young mens Terrors, they are old mens Treasures; Though young mens Laughter, they are old mens honours. More Experience is here shrouded, than Fair Looks, or Fresh Locks ever yet attained.

\* *Cani Juvenum Spectra, Senum Specula; Juvenum Ludibria, Senum Decora: Adag.*

**Now there as ye sain, that I am foule  
and olde  
Than drede you not to ben a cokewolde.**

Now whereas you still cast in my Dish, mine Age and Deformity; This you may use for an Antidote against Jealousie. When you are abroad, you need not fear me; Affection is grown so cold in me, it can work no strong Effects on my Phantasie. Neither  
will

will any one desire much to court me, for my Deformity. Decrepit Age and want of Beauty, are sufficient Guardians to preserve Chastity. For as Age is ever attended on by Honour, it is with more Reverence loved than lusted after.

But natheles, sin I know your delite  
I shall fulfil your worldly appetite.

These now (qd she) one of these things  
twey

To haue me foule and olde, til that I  
dey

And be to you a trewe humble wiſe  
And neuer you displease in all my life  
Or els wol you haue me yong and faire  
And take your aduenturist of the repaire  
That shal come to your house, because  
of me

Or in some other place, may well be ?

But go too Sir ; I see these pleas will hardly please. The Bride that lyes by you must be beautiful or she will not content you. Beauty is a dainty Pearl in your eye. Well ; you shall have your desire : There is nothing that may delight you , wherein I will not satisſie you, if it be in my power  
to

to grant you. Go to then ; I will offer to your choice two things , wherein please your self, and you shall please me who am your second self. First is, whether you will have me aged and deformed as I now am ; and so find me an humble, loving, and affable Wife, unwilling to displease you, ready at bed and board to be disposed by you, in all respects conformable unto you. Or else, you will have me young and fair , and subject your self to the hazards of beauty. For well you know , that as youth is sooner tempted, so is beauty soonest tainted. I cannot avoid it but I must have Suitors to court me, Servants to comfort me , dainty Didappers to visit me. Your house must be alwayes open to Strangers, mine arms to embraces, my perfum'd Lips to youthful Kisses.

**Now**

Now chese your seluen whether that you  
liketh

This Knight auiseth him, and soze siketh  
But at the last, he said in manere :

My lady and my loue, and wife so dere

I put me in your wise gouernaunce

Cheseth your self, which may be moze  
pleasunce

And most honour to you and me also

I do no foze whether of the two —

The world is well amended ; Now when  
it is in his choyce, he stands indifferent for  
her Change. Yet could he find in his heart  
that she had Beauty, so none might share  
with him in her Beauty. But Jealousie is  
such a dangerous Malady, as to prevent all  
occasion, he will content himself with her  
Deformity, rather than become subject to  
so cureless an Infirmary. First therefore he  
here adviseth, then sigheth, lastly thus con-  
cludeth : Albeit, Dear Wife, you may ima-  
gine what Comfort it would be to me to en-  
joy a Beautiful Bed-fellow ; one whose out-  
ward Parts might make her honoured  
where ever she resorted ; and whose sweet  
Society might allay my Distasts, and im-  
prove

prove my Comforts whensoever occasioned;  
yet shall not you find me so drenched or  
drowned in sensual Delights, as to prefer  
mine own Appetite before the Light of  
Reason. I understand by your grave and  
discreet Arguments, that you are wise, which  
is to be incomparably valued above all out-  
ward Beauty. Make choyce then of what  
may seem best in your own Discretion; I  
will in no wise give way to my own blind  
Affection; which of these two soever may  
tender you most Pleasure and Honour, chuse  
it, and so dispose of me and it, as your Ho-  
nour may be most advanced by it. I shall  
hold my self content whether of these two  
you accept.

**Foꝛ as you liketh, it suffiseth me.**

**Thaſe haue I got of you the maſtrie**

(qđ ſhe)

**ſin I may cheſe, and gouerne as my  
liſt**

**Ye certes wiſe (qđ he) I hold it foꝛ the  
beſt**

**Kiſſe me (qđ ſhe) we be no lenger wꝛothe**

**Foꝛ by my trueth, I woll be to you**

**bothe &c.**

Now



Now what she so long aim'd at, she has got; her *own Will*; and therein, which may seem more strange, his Happiness. You have given me, saith she, the Mastery; which shall be such a Government, as it shall not have the least taste of Tyranny. This you have done so freely, as it enjoins my Usage to be friendly. Go to Sir; You shall hence find what Benefit an obedient and observant Husband may reap by resigning his Will to the Will of his Wife: You stood doubtful at first, whether of those two Offers which I made you, were to be accepted by you; That is, whether you would have me continue as I am, Aged and Deformed; but withal Constant, Continent, and to your Command Obedient; Or Young and Beautiful, but withal Youthful, and in danger to become Incontinent. But now I shall take from you all Occasion of Doubting, and make you happy in your Affection. For I will be to you both Young and Beautiful; and withal so constant in my Love, so Continent in my Desires, so Moderate in my Delights, so Temperate in my Resolves, so Discreet in my Directions, so Vertuously Good and Gracious in all my Actions, as you

O

shall

shall find your Happines fully Crowned in enjoying me. Nor will I feed your Hopes with any long Delay; For by the next Morning, shall my Beauty be such, as no Lady from East to West may compare with me; whereof, with my Life, dispose as may best please you.

**And so they slepte till it was morow  
graie**

**And than she said, when it was daie  
Cast vp the courteine, and loke how it is.  
And when this knight saw all this  
That she so faire was and so yong ther:  
For joy he hent her in his armes two.**

Howsoever it be said, that they both slept; It is probably to be doubted, whether he, at least, slept or no. Such a longing desire he had to see this approaching Hour of her Transmutation. But when this happy Hour was approached, *Aurora* her burnish'd Beams dispersed, and the Curtain drawn aside, by which this Brides Beauty might be discerned; it is not to be imagined how strangely this over-joyed Bridegroom was intranced. Straight-waies he inwreaths her in his Arms, looks Babies  
in

in her Eyes; and as one embathed in Bliss,  
a thousand times a row he kisseth her, meer-  
ly transported with joy for the Beauty he  
saw in her.

*Thus did they surset it in midst of Plenty,  
Ten Kisses short as one, one long as Twenty.*

To treat farther of it, I will not; Mo-  
desty would have this Subject enskreened,  
& left to the Imagination to conceive it. Let  
it suffice, that as her Beauty could not chuse  
but give him Content, so was she to him  
constant and obedient: In which mutual  
Affection; seconded with perfect Joy, free  
from all Jar, they continued till their Lives  
ended.

——— And Jesu Christ us sende  
Husbondes meke, yong, and fresh a bedde  
And grace to ouerliue hem that we wed.  
And I pray to God, to short her lues  
That will not be gouerned by her wiues  
And olde and angry nigardes of dispence  
God send hem sone a very pestilence.

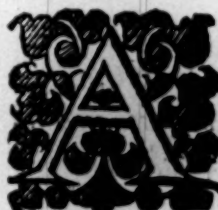
Here at last this good Old Wife of *Eath*  
ends her long Relation with a serious Sup-  
plication; By which she shews that she has

one Colt's Tooth yet left; Neither doth she pray only for her self, but for the whole Congregation of her Sex: That they may have Husbands *Meek*, to live with, *Young*, to love with, and *Fresh*, to lie with; That they may ever be their Survivors; That such Husbands may have short Lives, who will not suffer their Wives to be Governours; And that a Pestilence may light on all such Husbands and Niggardly Cot-queans as cannot dispose of their own, but are Misers. And so ends she her Story to make her Audience merry. Thus then will we conclude our Comment, and recount the Comical Passages of their Nuptial Content, woven up in these Verses.

*The King's appeas'd, the Queen rests satisfi'd,  
The Bridegroom joyes in his new-formed Bride  
No Part in her appears from Top to Toe  
But may give Nature thanks for making't so;  
Inward and Outward Graces joyntly meet,  
To make his Comfort in her more compleat;  
Long did they live together in true Love,  
While each with other in Affection strove:  
" May all Folk marry so that would live well,  
" Or let them tarry, and lead Apes in Hell.*



An  
APPENDIX.

fter such time as the Autor, upon the instancy of sundry Persons of Quality, had finish'd his Comments upon these Two Tales; the Perusal of them begot that Influence over the clear and weighty Judgments of the Strictest and Rigidest Censors; as their high Approvement of them induced their Importunity to the Author to go on with the rest, as he had successfully done with these Two first: Ingenuously protesting, that they



they had not read any Subject discoursing by way of Illustration, and running Descant on such Light, but Harmless Fancies, more handsomely couched, nor modestly shadowed. All which, though urgently press'd, could make no Impression on the Author: For his Definite Answer was this: "That his Age, without  
 "any Appellant, might render his Apology;  
 "and privilege him from Commenting on  
 "Conceptions (were they never so pregnant)  
 "being interveined with Levity, Saying;

"Of such light Toyes Hee'd ta'n a long

"Adew,

"Nor did He mean his Knowledge to

"renew.

"Neither could he entertain any such thought  
 "of Perfection in these, being begun and finish'd in his Blooming Years; wherein the  
 "Heat of Concept, more than the Depth of Intellect dictated to his Pen. The Remainder  
 "of his Hours henceforth was to number his  
 "Daies: But if Æson's Herb should revive  
 "him, and store him with a new Plumage, he  
 "was persuaded that his Youthful Genius  
 "could not bestow his Endeavour on any Au-  
 "thor

“thor with more Pleasure nor Complacency to  
 “Fancy, than the Illustrations of Chaucer.

Amidst this Discourse, a Critick stepping  
 in, objected out of the Quickness of his Cen-  
 sure, much like that Phantastical Madam, who  
 drew Rapsodies from her Carpet, that he  
 could allow well of Chaucer, if his Language  
 were Better. Whereto the Author of these  
 Commentaries return'd him this Answer :  
 “Sir, It appears, you prefer Speech before the  
 “Head-piece ; Language before Invention ;  
 “whereas Weight of Judgment has ever given  
 “Invention Priority before Language. And  
 “not to leave you dissatisfied, As the Time  
 “wherein these Tales were writ, rendered  
 “him incapable of the one ; So his Pregnancy  
 “of Fancy approv'd him incomparable for the  
 “other. Which Answer still'd this Censor,  
 and justified the Author ; leaving New-holme  
 to attest his Deserts ; his Works to perpetuate  
 his Honour.

---

FINIS.

---